

12-1-1962

The Spiritual Letters of the Venerable Francis Libermann Volume One: Letters to Religious Sisters and Aspirants

Henry J. Koren C.S.Sp.

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THE VENERABLE FRANCIS LIBERMANN, C.S.Sp.
(1802-1852)



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5 SPIRITAN ARCHIVES
U.S.A.

The Spiritual Letters of The Venerable Francis Libermann

Volume One

LETTERS TO RELIGIOUS SISTERS
AND ASPIRANTS

edited and translated by

WALTER VAN DE PUTTE, C.S.Sp., LL.D.

and

JAMES COLLERY, C.S.Sp.

1962

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Editions E. Nauwelaerts
Louvain, Belgium

Editions Spiritus
Rhenen, U., Netherlands

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Imprimi potest

Vernon F. Gallagher, C.S.Sp.

Provincial Superior

Pittsburgh, February 2, 1962.

Nihil obstat

Carl P. Hensler, S.T.D.

Censor Librorum

Pittsburgh, April 4, 1964.

Imprimatur

John J. Wright, S.T.D.

Bishop of Pittsburgh

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 62-12768

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Printed in the United States by

THE AD PRESS, LTD., New York, N. Y.

2X 4705
462
A4
vol. I
cop. II
Spir.
Coll.

03562263

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PREFACE

Father Joseph Guibert, S.J., described the Venerable Francis Libermann as, "the greatest spiritual director of the last century." It is with a view of bringing our readers in contact with the mind and heart of that wonderful spiritual guide, that we present our first collection in English of his SPIRITUAL LETTERS.

In the present volume are letters he addressed to various women religious, to aspirants to the religious life, and to his three nieces who eventually became nuns.

Left to himself, Father Libermann would probably never have undertaken the direction of souls. But in this as in every other action of his life, God's will was paramount. Once he recognized that God wished him to undertake this exacting work, he put into practice a constant theme of his letters, *surrender to God's good pleasure*, and then went ahead undaunted.

He was convinced that the role of the spiritual director was one of removing the obstacles to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and time and again he warns those he directs against becoming in any way attached to himself, when his sole aim is to attach them to Jesus alone.

A note of confidence in God and Our Blessed Lady, and encouragement in the face of obstacles, runs right through all his writings. For him fear and strain are unworthy of a friend of Jesus and Mary. Courage and perseverance in spite of repeated falls are standard recommendations. Once he wrote to Mother de Villeneuve of the Sisters of Castres: "The majority of souls are lost through discouragement."

One who seeks literary elegance in his letters of direction will fail to find it. In writing to souls whom he sought to draw to Jesus, he generally used French, which for him was an adopted language. He wrote under the strain of over-

PREFACE

whelming occupations, and often while suffering from severe attacks of migraine and other ailments. Many of these letters were literally dashed off in spare moments and always with the consciousness that he owed them to his correspondents. His sincerity, his deep love of Jesus and Mary, his consuming zeal for the sanctification of souls, and his unfailing encouragement to peace and calm trust in God, shine out in every line. His aim was to "influence people," not for economic gain but for the spiritual benefit of his neighbor.

Although the letters in this collection are addressed to religious or prospective religious, they also have a message for priests and layfolk. That message is one of fidelity to the Holy Spirit and absolute trust and confidence in the love of Our Lord and Our Blessed Mother.

It is the fervent prayer of the translators that this message may bring lasting peace to many troubled souls.

I. LETTERS TO LOUISE (VOILLE) DES LOGES (SISTER AURELIA)

Louise des Loges was one of five girls who heard God's call to the apostolate of the much neglected negroes. These ladies consulted Father Tisserant with regard to their vocation. Father Tisserant was temporarily engaged in work for the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Victories in Paris, and he had become one of Father Libermann's chief collaborators in his work for the Negro. Louise later entered the Institute of the Immaculate Conception of Castres, a Society dedicated to the service of the negroes in the mission field. She took the name of Sister Aurelia. How Father Libermann carefully guided her during her early years in the religious life is seen in the following letters that have been preserved for us.

I

Letter One

December 23, 1842

Vol. 3, p. 318¹

Glory to Jesus and His Holy Cross!

My dear Sister in Our Lord Jesus Christ:

I regret that I have been unable to reply to your letter before this. I am so eager to give you consolation that the thought of this delay broke my heart. I trust that our good Master will forgive me, as it was physically impossible for me to write to you.

Please do not, my good sister, allow this delay to worry you. I am sure that Mary, our very dear Mother, has compensated you for my silence. The fact that I have not written

¹References are made to the fourteen volumes of *Notes et Documents relatifs à la vie et l'œuvre du Vénérable François-Marie-Paul Libermann*, Paris, 1929-1956.

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

sooner should not prevent your writing to me whenever you think it necessary, or for that matter, whenever you wish to do so.

I earnestly desire to help you in the task of attaining holiness, and to guide you in the way of the divine love of our most sweet Lord Jesus. From now on, therefore, write to me every month or even every fortnight, and also at any other time that you feel that it will benefit your soul. It is not necessary that you should pay the postage on your letters. He Who feeds even the smallest animals will provide what is necessary for those who desire to serve Him. After all, whether your money or mine is used for the postage, it is always Our Lord's money. Are the letters not written in the name of and for the love of that dear Master? So do not worry about the expense.

You wish that I should, henceforth, consider you as my child. Yes, you may count on it that I shall have a truly fatherly affection for your soul, and that I shall interest myself in it as a father interests himself in his child, and as a shepherd cares for the sheep entrusted to him. Open your soul with perfect freedom and peace. Join wholeheartedly in the great desire the Supreme Shepherd has for your sanctification. Have confidence in my words and guidance, because you can be sure that I fully adopt the Divine Master's plan for your sanctification. May He grant me the grace of His divine light.

I shall do my best to see the workings of the interior life of your soul, and to guide you by means of God's grace alone. For yourself, be pure in your views, your desires, your sentiments, in a word in all that takes place in your soul. Cling to Jesus who alone is the king and love of our souls, and do not become attached to me for I am but rottenness.

When I speak to you in a kindly way, do not say that I am good. When God is pleased (through me) to grant you

LETTERS TO LOUISE DES LOGES

some ray of light, do not say that I have enlightened you ; it is Jesus who gives you His light. When my words arouse good desires in your soul, do not say that I am a saint ; it is Jesus alone who is the holiness of your soul. Belong only to Jesus, love only Jesus, live only for Jesus. But be docile to my guidance, see Jesus in me, and let every word of mine be for you the word of our most sweet Jesus.

When, with heavenly guidance, I notice faults in you, I shall point them out to you with the sweetness and vigor of Our Lord Jesus. Place yourself before Him, humble and mild, and ready to receive correction from my lips. Ask Him to change you, to make you use the means that will effect this change.

Keep constantly before your mind the divine Jesus as the bridegroom of your soul. You are His spouse, poor but loved. I am the bridegroom's friend, who sees His goodness in the way He works in your soul. I am happy to see how He loves you and the great gifts He bestows on your soul. What a joy it is for the friend of this divine bridegroom, to hear His heart-to-heart conversation with His spouse ! Your whole joy must consist in belonging to that most sweet bridegroom. Your soul must, as it were, plunge into His divine love and rest constantly on His bosom.

All my joy, too, must be in that divine spouse of your soul, and my satisfaction must be in seeing His goodness and love, and how pleased He is with you. I must do all I can to help this poor spouse to so adorn herself as to find favor in the eyes of the divine bridegroom, so that He may take delight in His spouse.

I shall now answer briefly the points you mentioned. On another occasion I shall deal with your vocation at greater length.

Do not be surprised at the fact that you have troubles of mind. It would be unusual if you did not have such troubles

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

in your present circumstances. The obstacles which you find in your path should not cause you any worry; the devil always obtrudes such obstacles on such occasions. The objections which people put to you are without foundation. It is false to hold that parents who wish to prevent their children from entering religion are doing God's will. We must obey God before everyone else and thus procure our soul's sanctification. Be at peace with regard to this and be quite sure that God's divine will for you will be done.

I believe, from what Father Tisserant has told me about your interior life, that you are not meant to live in the world, and that the good Lord expects more from you than from those whose lives are spent in the world. Some other time I shall speak to you about your vocation which comes to you from the good Lord. I feel that your break with the world will not be violent, and that you will not have to leave without the consent of your parents. The good Lord will arrange everything as He sees fit; let us put our trust in Him. I shall treat of this more fully in my next letter.

The story of the saints is full of examples of children who entered the convent in spite of their parents' unwillingness, and of parents who entered contrary to the wishes of their children. St. Jerome uses strong words about this: "Continue your march, leap over your father and mother." He even uses the expression, "walk on your father etc.," if they oppose your desire for sanctification. But, my dear friend, do not worry about all this. We have not yet reached such a pass. We shall use gentleness, and Our Blessed Mother will free you with all sweetness. Be patient for a while and you will find that everything will be settled satisfactorily.

Besides, since God's moment has not yet come, you must wait patiently. Let God move you this way or that as He pleases. Be like a toy in the hands of the child Jesus. He calls you, arouses good desires in you, and then puts obstacles

LETTERS TO LOUISE DES LOGES

in the way of their fulfilment. Wait quietly with meekness and humility for the outcome of His divine guidance of your soul, and observe how tenderly He loves you. If He puts your fidelity to the test, it is because He wishes to give you greater graces and make you perfect. Place yourself in His presence with your soul at peace, and put aside any thought that causes you anxiety or worry. Do not be afraid, Jesus is not angry with you; He loves you and because He loves you, whatever happens to you is either willed or permitted by Him.

Be careful, my dear friend, not to leave Jesus. Receive Him as often as possible, with confidence and abandonment, into your heart. Never withdraw from Him; embrace Him with your whole being and let Him be complete master of all that concerns you. Rest peacefully on His adorable Heart and in the arms of Mary. Be happy that the good Master desires to place you on His holy cross. Do not worry about temptations and troubles; these will disappear and leave your soul more firmly attached to its God and Lord, Jesus.

Bear all with mildness, patience, peace and love. Realize that you are unworthy of the great favor of sharing in the Cross of Jesus and in the persecutions He suffered from the world and the devil. It is because you wish to belong truly to Jesus that you suffer such things; bear them, then, as would a soul that belongs to this Divine Savior. May our souls belong to God and Mary!

Your poor servant in the holy charity of Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

P.S. I met Miss Lapique in Paris. Her soul is good and beautiful and I trust that God will sanctify her. Maintain your contacts with her, which give me great consolation.

Letter Two

January 10, 1843

Vol. 4, p. 691

J. M. J.

My very dear Sister in Our Lord Jesus Christ:

May the peace of the Child Jesus, that was announced by the angels, fill your soul!

The state of true perfection is always one of peace. Troubles come usually, nay always, from a source that is not God. This source is usually either self-love, excessive self-indulgence, or lastly a too great eagerness to possess graces, perfection, or the gifts of God which we particularly esteem. The latter desire is good but it is nature, another evil principle, which causes that excessive eagerness, rigidity and tenseness in its pursuit.

When God acts in our souls, and we follow His divine impulses without intruding our faults and natural ideas, He always acts with peace, and it is this peace that enables us to recognize His divine presence. Peace and humility are always signs of the presence and action of His divine grace in our souls. Lack of peace and humility is a sign that our own nature, with its affections, sentiments and imperfect actions, has become mixed with God's holy inspirations.

From this you realize how important it is for you to establish yourself in that holy and humble peace before God, and to preserve it with humility and mildness, for your perfection consists in following fully those diverse impressions and impulses of grace. The more docile and compliant your soul is to the guidance of your heavenly spouse, the more perfect you will be, the more will you be enlightened by His divine will, strong in bearing contradictions, and the holier will

LETTERS TO LOUISE DES LOGES

be your conduct both interior and exterior. On the contrary, the greater is nature's share in your actions, the less holy they will be, the less pliant and docile you will be to the guidance of the Divine Child, the less supernatural will be the strength with which you will follow that guidance.

Strength that is born of nature makes the soul rigid and inflexible. The strength and vigor of grace bring sweetness to the soul and often give consolation even to those whom we are obliged to oppose and resist. Souls that come under that divine action of grace have sweetness and peace while still remaining strong and constant . . . Holy Scripture describes the action of merciful Providence as "reaching from end to end (i.e. from the beginning of its action to its fulfilment) with might, and disposing all things with sweetness." Jesus' divine action, vigorous yet sweet, will, some day, take place in the soul of His beloved spouse.

Be faithful, my very dear friend, to whatever the Well-beloved desires to do in you, and you will experience the marvels of His love for you and the incomparable sweetness of His mercy. Remain in sweetness, peace and humility before Him. Give your will earnestly to Him and abandon it entirely to Him. When you have once truly surrendered your will to Jesus, to will no longer belongs to you but to Jesus, and you must allow His divine will to guide and carry you away.

Pay close attention to this. Whenever you follow your own will, no matter how holy its object, rigidity and inflexibility will result, but whenever your will is docile and flexible before Jesus and you follow only the will of that dear and Divine Spouse, then strength and sweetness will fill your soul. Oh! how strong and sweet is that dear will of Jesus, the only love of our soul.

Remain in your poverty, weakness and entire nothingness before your Divine Spouse. Make Him Lord over your whole

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

being and acknowledge that you are His property. Consider yourself now as already His spouse. Though you have not yet made your vow, your soul must, nevertheless, be bound to this dear Spouse, and you must consider yourself as belonging to Him for ever, and without restriction.

Further, since you accept that you are the spouse of Jesus, you must yield to Him all the rights and authority of an ordinary husband. A pure and perfect love of Jesus should inspire you with a holy generosity in giving yourself to Him. In His boundless love for you, He will use those rights you give Him and will fill you with His holiness, uniting you more and more to Himself, and giving you an ever-increasing share in all the treasures of His heart. When you give up your rights entirely, Jesus will grant you all the favors with which He loads those most dear to Him, as a gratuitous gift of His love.

This heavenly union of Jesus with your soul will be accomplished in Holy Communion. It is there, also, that you must give your soul with all its powers to Him, and leave Him absolute Master over your will, desires, affections and all the movements of your soul. It is there you must remain in your poverty and nothingness before that beloved Spouse.

He will pour grace into your soul like a river and fill it to the brim. Rejoice that He chose you to be His spouse. Be faithful to Him and be pure, so that in your soul, which He chose because of His excessive love and mercy, He may always find delight. Do not fear crosses and pains. The more of them the divine Spouse sends you, the more progress you will make in His holy love. It does not matter whether these crosses be exterior or interior ones; what does matter is that preserving your soul in peace and humility before God, you bear them with love as did our Divine Model. Submit your soul with sweetness, love and peace, to all the wishes of the most lovable Jesus.

LETTERS TO LOUISE DES LOGES

When we bear crosses in this way we merit great graces for the sanctification of our souls. Crosses, as it were, take us out of ourselves more and more, they empty us of ourselves and fill us with God; they make us receptive and docile to the impressions and impulses of divine grace; they make us humble and small in our own eyes and distrustful of self; they make us live in entire dependence on Jesus, our only love, and realizing that dependence, we are aware of our poverty, weakness, and wretchedness. Blessed are we when, thus destitute of everything, we realize our nothingness and weakness and are prompted to remain in perfect dependence on Jesus, who is the only foundation and source of all our strength.

With regard to your desire to give yourself to Our Lord in your holy vocation, follow the same method as in everything else. In general, violent movements are not according to God's plan. It is God who is calling you; it belongs to Him to give you also the means that will enable you to carry out His wishes. I am certain that He will give you those means.

I realize that when you finally leave your parents, nature will suffer from this separation and you will cause them grief. But this is not a valid reason for refusing to follow your vocation. The pain they suffer will be a means of sanctifying your parents. Try to help them to offer their sacrifice like saints. On the other hand, to leave and break away from one's parents in a way that will cause upset is not normally in accordance with God's will. Before we permit ourselves to cause such a great upset, we must be certain that the sovereign Master wishes it so. When God's will is not clear in the matter, we run the risk of acting from a motive of natural haste or from some other motive not inspired by God.

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Let us wait for everything as it comes from God's hand and expect nothing from our own efforts. Walk always with peace, mildness, and equanimity, though at the same time with vigor. Cling to God with all the power of your soul and follow always whatever God wants with mildness and sweetness.

Do not be afraid to write to me. I have already told you that you should write as often as the good of your soul requires it and you are in a position to do so.

May Jesus be everything for your soul and may Mary our good Mother give you constantly a share in the treasures of her most holy Heart.

Your devoted servant in the charity of Christ,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

3

Letter Three

January, 1843

Vol. 4, p. 78

J. M. J.

My dear Sister:

I should very much like to be in Paris during the few days you will spend there. This, however, is not possible. It is difficult for me to leave our small community. Only very grave and urgent reasons could excuse my absence. Besides, at present I am not well. If you could, on the strength of making a retreat, get away for one or two days and could come to see me, I would be very pleased. However, if this is not possible, let us accept God's will with all our hearts. I do not think that it is God's will that you should leave home just now. If I had known beforehand you were

LETTERS TO LOUISE DES LOGES

coming, it might have been possible for me to have made the necessary arrangements. Since I did not foresee this, I do not know what I ought to do.

There is a convent in the South, whose Superior has written twice to me about our project. This is a new society which desires to work for the poorest and most neglected classes. The Sisters instruct young girls and take care of the sick. The society was founded three or four years ago and has twenty-three Sisters, and I have been told that their spirit is excellent and in accordance with God's will. Their good Superior desires to work for the most abandoned souls in the missions. She heard of us and our work for the Negroes and she immediately sought to get in touch with me. She has already told me of her aims, and wishes to be united to us. I spoke to her about you and the other ladies who are eager to do the same type of work and suggested that she establish a house in Amiens. She said that she could not do so just now and the good reasons which she gave show her to be wise and full of the spirit of the Lord. She told me that you would be allowed to join her Institute and that you would spend one-and-a-half or two years in her convent so as to imbibe the spirit of the society; they could send you to Amiens later. I agree with that idea. It is better that you should enter a society that is already started than that we should start one ourselves. The difficulties at the beginning of a work are always considerable and are apt to discourage a great number.

The Superior intends to go to Paris in the near future and it would be providential if she were there while you are in that city. If this should not happen, the good Lord will provide. Place all your confidence in Him alone, preserve peace of soul, and aim at sanctifying yourself while waiting for the time when He will be pleased to fulfill His designs in your regard.

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

I received a letter today from Bishop Barron, Vicar Apostolic of Guinea, in which he asked me to send religious Sisters to his vicariate. I told him he would have to wait, but this shows you that there is an opening—the best one could imagine.

Five of our missionaries will go out to that vast country, which is still totally uncivilized. I believe that the good Lord has destined this new society of Sisters for work in that unhappy country. Those who go there will have much to suffer, but they will have an opportunity of doing immense good. Let us give a free hand to our divine Master and not try to interfere with His designs for us, which are to benefit the neglected souls He wishes to entrust to us. I can say, however, that we will not abandon San Domingo. At present I know nothing of conditions there but I am expecting information from Fr. Tisserant who is there at present. I hope that the good Lord will send us a sufficient number of generous and devoted souls to enable us to continue both missions.

I would write at greater length if I were not exhausted. Please pass on to Miss Lapique what I have told you in this letter. Discuss the matter between you and let me know your opinion.

May Jesus and Mary accompany both of you in all your good designs, and may the divine will be accomplished in you in all its fulness.

Your poor servant in the charity of Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

LETTERS TO LOUISE DES LOGES

4

Letter Four

March 16, 1843

Vol. 4, p. 144

J. M. J.

My dear Sister :

I greatly rejoice in the presence of Our Lord, seeing that you are completely withdrawn from the world. From now on you no longer have anything in common with the world and can forget it altogether. I am not sorry that Our Lord abandoned you somewhat to your weakness, and allowed you to suffer anxiety before you heard how your parents had reacted to your entry into religion. From this you will see how little you can trust in your own powers, and you will thus be forced to place complete and humble confidence in Jesus, who is your all.

Yes, certainly, He is your all, and from now on you must live for Him alone. You will frequently experience His tender love for you. Keep your soul at peace before God. Do not be surprised that you are subject to distractions; you must expect to have all sorts of temptations in the novitiate. You belong to Our Lord and I hope that you will surrender yourself to Him ever more completely and without reservation. Distractions are not a sign that there is something amiss with you. Walk always with confidence. At times when you lack pious feelings, offer your dispositions to our good Master. It is not necessary for perfection that you should feel divine love and devotion for Our Lord. But it is necessary and also sufficient that you should be disposed to give yourself completely to that divine Master and live for Him alone.

You should try at all times to have the following dispositions :

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

i) Peace in the midst of pains and privations of all kinds. This peace should be based on confidence in Jesus and His divine love.

ii) Patience with yourself in the midst of your imperfections and in bearing also the imperfections of others.

iii) Mildness, which is the fruit of that peace and patience.

iv) Humility, which must be the basis of all the religious virtues, which God's goodness will give you.

v) A low opinion of yourself. This should not be difficult for you especially at present, as you probably find many traces in you of the imperfections of which people in the world find it so hard to be rid.

However, while realizing how vile you are in the eyes of God and men, you must always preserve mildness and peace in your heart, and strive constantly in the midst of your poverty, for divine love in all things. Your wretchedness should never be an obstacle to your love of Jesus nor to a most perfect trust in Him. Since you see and feel how very poor and full of imperfections and weaknesses you are, you should feel more keenly your entire dependence on the divine Master. You must understand the immensity of His tenderness and mercy towards you, since, in spite of your shortcomings, He chooses you to belong entirely to Him. Therefore, "as the eyes of servants are on the hands of their mistress" so must you, while remaining little and poor, be firmly attached to Jesus and, in this attitude, always wait for His divine mercy.

As a beggar who will die of hunger, cold or thirst unless the Lord come to his assistance, and as one who is entirely dependent on His compassion and mercy, so should you be in the presence of God. At the same time be full of confidence

LETTERS TO LOUISE DES LOGES

and love. Expect everything from His bounty and be quite sure that you will belong to Him and that He will guide you. I need not recommend the practice of obedience; this is the fundamental virtue of those who are consecrated to God in religious life. Let your obedience be mild, sweet, loving, complete and offered without murmuring or reflection, prompt and full of joy and gladness.

I am not surprised that your parents speak to you in the manner you mentioned. That one should renounce the world and all that is in it is puzzling to those who are subject to its laws. They call humility servility, mortification folly, divine love superfluity, the spirit of sacrifice (especially when religious devotion is allied with contempt for the world) mental exaltation, and thus they see everything upside down. Let them say what they please but let us surrender ourselves without reservation to the most sweet Jesus.

The good Lord will soon send you good Miss Lapique and another saintly person from our district. They will arrive early in April.

I have at last received word from Father Tisserant, who arrived safely in Saint-Pierre in Martinique and I hope that he will soon leave for San Domingo. Our good sister Rose Lapique sent me the letter of your pastor, and it pleased me very much. I saw Rose quite recently in Paris and she is more and more determined (to follow her vocation).

I promised you before your departure that I would send you a holy priest to encourage and console you in any pain or trouble you might experience. I wrote to him immediately after I had made that promise. He is Father de Rivières, and is pastor of Cordes. He told me that he would soon visit you and perhaps he has done so already. With regard to your money, as in everything else, do what your good Mother tells you.

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

May Jesus and Mary watch over you, may they guide your every step, filling your soul with the sanctity of Jesus and causing it to correspond perfectly with the most holy and merciful designs of that good Master.

Your most devoted servant in the most holy Heart of Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Missionary of the Holy Heart
of Mary

5

Letter Five La Neuville, March 26, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 162

Jesus, Mary, Joseph

My good and dear Sister :

It gives me great consolation to see that Our Lord treats you with so much kindness and mercy. Do not worry, your interior state is not evil. Those impressions (you speak of) come from the grace of our Divine Master. Bear well in mind, what ought to be known to every Christian, that our unworthiness and infidelity do not prevent us from sharing in divine grace. It is true that you have not done anything to merit the favors Jesus bestows on you. Let this serve to teach you what you are of yourself and what you owe to our Divine Master. Of yourself you are but a fountain of troubles, anxieties, embarrassment, hesitation in the ways of God, self-love, sin, indifference for the Beloved of our souls. But Jesus took pity on you. He led you into solitude and spoke there to your heart. Listen to this dear Lord, and be docile to His divine voice. It is He who clearly imprints His love

LETTERS TO LOUISE DES LOGES

on your soul, and if you were very faithful and generous you would experience many more graces. Do not worry so much about your infidelities. Remain in your lowliness and poverty before Him and allow Him to do what He pleases in your soul.

Let the fact that you are unworthy to receive His graces urge you to be a little more faithful and generous. It is to this end that you have been granted these graces. Jesus, the love of your soul, wishes by every means to draw you to Himself. He saw that when He withdrew His graces, you were weak, poor and wretched and half-discouraged and depressed. This was not pleasing to His heart which is so full of love for your soul. He wants you to be His completely,—to be generous, humble, full of love,—and His infinite goodness has arranged things so attractively that it is difficult for your soul not to follow Him.

Be faithful then and abandon yourself to that most dear Lord. I am not afraid, my dear Sister, that you will lose humility on account of the sensible graces you receive. I feel sure that you will not be so foolish. Since you know how weak your soul is, you could not become proud when the good Lord Jesus floods your soul with favors and submerges your natural cowardice and weak character. Were you to become vain, you would be like a man who “has lost his head.” Therefore do not be afraid, God’s goodness will save you from such folly. Do not be surprised that Jesus is so good to you. He usually acts thus with souls, whom He wishes to strengthen and load with graces so as to rouse them up and, as it were, compel them by His gentle but powerful impulse to leave aside their lassitude to give up their faults and vices, and to go forward with greater energy and generosity.

I am sure that several good Sisters in your convent are experiencing or have, in the past, experienced such violent

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

emotions as you have felt. That these emotions cause you to feel oppressed is due to bodily weakness. You are not conditioned to bear the shock of Jesus' love for your soul. Yield to Him; allow Him to pour into you the torrents of His divine love, to carry you away with His impulse. Try only with gentleness and sweetness to conceal any exterior signs of what is happening in your soul. I know that this will be difficult and very often impossible but that does not matter. Our Lord will be content with your good will. Since the Sisters do not realize that your external actions on these occasions are due to bodily weakness, it is only right that you should conceal these from them; otherwise they would think that something extraordinary was taking place in you and this would have great disadvantages.

Do not be afraid of incurring guilt in the sight of God in the midst of these spiritual delights. Trust in Jesus and Mary, try to be faithful to these graces which are very great and which should dispose you to make progress in holiness. Though, now, you greatly desire perfection and your soul is filled with a great love of God, remember that you have all kinds of imperfections and faults. You will rid yourself of them later on when you have passed beyond this state of excessive joy. Although this state of extreme sensible graces does not free you completely from your faults, it does, nevertheless, help in weakening them. You ought, therefore, to thank Our Lord always for His goodness towards you, while at the same time you acknowledge your wretchedness in His presence.

You are now in the state of spiritual infancy and imperfection. Do not, however, despise this state or seek to leave it because of its low degree. As I have already told you, you need the graces of this state. Profit by the graces which the Divine Master gives you and use them to attain the further degrees of love of Him. Be always humble and poor before

LETTERS TO LOUISE DES LOGES

God and the Sisters. Be docile and obedient to your superiors as to Our Lord Himself. If your superiors tell you to do things which interfere somewhat with your mental prayer and exercises of piety obey without question. You must learn to leave God for the sake of God. I gather that your good Mother Superior is very kind and loving to you. It is possible that she may be spoiling you a little through not pointing out your defects to you; but I presume that she just humors you a little to avoid hurting your sensitivities; she wants to encourage you and she is right in that. Be strong and generous so that the Divine Master may be glorified through the goodness with which He favors you. I leave you in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

A Sister whom the good Lord sends you from these parts is bringing you this letter. She is good and of solid piety. Please help her to get acclimatized in your convent. I do not think that she will experience any difficulty in feeling at home there, as she is used to a life of recollection, since she practised it in the world.

May Jesus and Mary be your strength and consolation.

Entirely yours in their most holy charity,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Missionary of the Holy Heart
of Mary

Letter Six La Neuville, June 25, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 252

J. M. J.

My dear Sister:

I rejoice with all my heart in the presence of our good Master because of all His kindness towards you, even though up to now you have not rendered Him any great service and may never be able to do so.

Your realization of your uselessness should not cause you sorrow. Remain in poverty and nothingness before Jesus, who wants to be all things in you. Offer Him your body and soul constantly to be sacrificed to His glory, whenever and wherever He chooses. Be prepared before Him as is a victim lying on the altar before the sacrificing priest. Desire one thing only—to be entirely at the disposal of our most sweet Lord Jesus. Surrender yourself completely to His divine good pleasure so that He may use you either for some work or to be immolated, sacrificed and annihilated for His greater glory. Then, if Jesus wishes to leave you in your uselessness, you must accept that you are the property of your Sovereign Master to be used and treated as He pleases. Accept, therefore, lovingly and peacefully your poverty, littleness, weakness and nothingness in the sight of your dear Master and when He turns you this way or that offer no resistance. Put your trust in Jesus and Mary, and be quite assured that your dispositions and state of soul are good. If only you are faithful and correspond to the love and kindness of Our Lord, then you will be able to sanctify yourself, to realize your fundamental poverty and wretchedness, to have a true opinion of yourself, and to acknowledge your true worth in the sight of your good Master and all the

LETTERS TO LOUISE DES LOGES

Sisters. It will also enable you to overcome self, and to sacrifice your own tastes and likes to divine love. Your Beloved will even cause you to discard your own tastes so as to conform yourself to His.

In this state you will be able to bear anything painful sent to you by the divine good pleasure. You will know your faults, imperfections and weakness; and yet you will preserve through all this a union of love with Jesus and perfect confidence in Him. The more you accept your state the greater will be your union with and confidence in Him.

True self-knowledge which is a product of divine grace always brings with it an increase of love for God. It will make your mind and heart more simple, docile and pliant before Our Lord, and in your relations with your superiors and even with the other Sisters. It will make your will perfectly submissive and abandoned to the divine Will. Therefore, be humble, peaceful and docile under the guidance of the great Master Who wishes to take care of your soul.

The fear and shame you experience in your present state are not exactly evil, indeed they are usual in such a state, but you should not voluntarily yield to them. Through confidence in Jesus and Mary you can calm them. Every time you deliberately yield to them and entertain them in your soul, you commit a fault. The distaste you feel for conversation is not an illusion but a cross; it is not given you in order that you might yield to it but rather that you should try to overcome it by holding conversations when the Rule demands it, and also by charity. Speak as gaily as possible. Act in such a way that nobody may detect your distaste for conversation or your serious nature. It is because you must act in this way that I say this distaste is a cross.

When you experience those interior flames, simply allow yourself to be consumed by them and drawn to Our Lord. Pour yourself out and become filled with Him. The only

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

thing you should resist is the overflow of these interior feelings to your senses, in such a way as to deprive you of their use. No good result or virtue will come from this. All the good lies in the divine love and communication which takes place interiorly. The loss of feeling is due to a constitutional weakness in you; it is a sickness. Hence it is no lie for you to state firmly that you are seized by weakness. You were right in asking Our Lord not to allow these outward visible effects, but I knew beforehand that He would not grant your request. You must submit to His divine good pleasure. If He wishes to play with you and to have you suffer shame and confusion before all the Sisters, adore His will and submit to Him in all humility, peace and love.

I leave you in the arms of Jesus and Mary. I forgot to point out that you must not be fainthearted because of the shame and fear you experience in your present state. Turn frequently to your good Mother in a spirit of holy confidence and obedience, not in a spirit of pusillanimity and weakness. In your feebleness and littleness you must always seek help in Our Lord and not in the words of men. At the same time you should, in a spirit of obedience and with great confidence and affection reveal to your superior all that is taking place in your soul.

Entirely yours in the holy charity of Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Missionary of the Holy Heart
of Mary

LETTERS TO LOUISE DES LOGES

7

Letter Seven

September 30, 1843

Vol. 4, p. 369

J. M. J.

My dear child :

I have already answered your last letter, as I wanted to answer in a hurry and could not wait for further explanations. That is why I found it necessary to be evasive in my letter since I wished to put off my decision until the occasion of my visit. Since I recently received more details regarding your state, I am now in a better position to make a judgment. Besides, I'm afraid I shall not be able to come as soon as I expected and wished. That is the reason for this letter.

My poor child, take care not to allow anxiety to bore into your heart. You are certainly passing through a great and dangerous temptation. Place yourself in the presence of the Divine Master and return to that peace and docility which is inspired by divine grace. As you rest in His presence, you should be absolutely indifferent with regard to the means that are to lead you to the end that God has in view.

You want me to found a Congregation whose members would go to the Negro missions. Try to realize the difficulties involved in such a foundation. Suppose you had ten members—and that would be presuming a lot—you would then be established in a poor house which would be wanting in everything. One of you would be superior. Suppose two or three of you had temptations of the sort that you yourself now suffer, what would become of the community? Some would leave, and other troubles and trials would result. Think how this would upset the other members.

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You want "to form a small community", but what guarantee have you that it will be successful. Suppose that, say after two years, you had no applicants, what would become of your poor community? Its members would go to foreign lands and if they became ill or some other occurrence prevented the establishing of a community, they would be obliged to return from the missions. They would be miserable and then what would happen to the little society? Consider these matters in God's presence. Again, what prudent director of souls would wish to send members to such a society and what guarantee would you be able to give?

You want to establish a community, but whom would you appoint as superior? How would you establish that Congregation and its Rule? Where would you find the older Sisters who would set an example of the ordinary practice, at least, of the rules of the community? If a society is to prosper there must be harmony and order, in the beginning at least. It is difficult to have this especially when there are some members who are hard to handle and direct.

My dear child, you probably have some trouble in the community to which you belong and this is the cause of your anxiety. If you complain now you will be in a worse position when you become a member of a community just established. It would be almost impossible to expect subordination in such a community as you envisage, and without subordination a community is hell. Such a community will never do any great good and will inevitably go down. I cannot here enter into detail regarding the great difficulties that go with the foundation of a society. I remember having spoken about these in Paris, before her departure, to Rose Lapique. She realized these difficulties just as much as I did. Consider yourself blessed to have found a good community for the holy work for the negroes. It is, in my opinion, one of the greatest graces Our Lord has bestowed on that work.

LETTERS TO LOUISE DES LOGES

If you have some difficulties, accept them as a devoted Christian soul must accept them, remaining at the foot of the cross and consecrating yourself to the glory of God. You should be devoured with zeal for the cross. What does it matter whether a pain be great or small so long as it is borne in the right spirit for the glory of the Master? Would you want to serve God only on condition that you would have nothing to suffer? Would you wish to enter on such a service and refuse to bear any pain? But, my dear child, if you now lack the courage to bear your present pains in your convent, your courage in bearing the trials you will meet in a separate and small community will be a thousand times less.

I can picture you saying that if God wants you in a separate community, He will know how to sustain you, to make you prosper and to send you postulants. But who told you that God wants you to form a separate community? Be quiet and peaceful, therefore, under the hand of God. I do not know where you got the idea that I intended to send you there for only a short time. This never entered my mind, nor did I ever say anything which could lead you to such a belief.

Remember what you thought in your calmer moments. You were always determined to remain where you are and to be sent to the missions by your superior. But now in temptation the demon alone puts these new ideas into your head. Reject such thoughts and forget them completely. Rose, Pauline, Therese, and Adele will bear me out that I never, by one word, showed any hesitation.

Once more then, speaking positively and formally, I say that you should not have any idea other than that of remaining where you have been brought by divine goodness. Prepare yourself, poor and small though you be, for the work He has in mind for you. Do not be unfaithful nor let temptation overcome you. Apply and devote yourself to your sanctification, accept your exterior and interior pains, bearing

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

them with love and preparing yourself for God's service according to His plan.

Remember also that the greatest saints have undergone temptations and sufferings of this sort. They are even necessary on the way to solid perfection. I trust that, in God's mercy, they are now over for you. Many saintly persons while undergoing such temptations fell into faults that were considerable. Self-love is at the root of such things and can go very far and lead to grave illusions.

Consider yourself blessed that you are still determined to belong completely to God. Continue thus and all will be well. Do not be surprised if that self-love which was for some time more-or-less in command, manifests itself in great or small things. This will pass by degrees. Submit completely to God and have no fear. He will be with you and Mary will not forsake you. Be constant, humble, mild, moderate, obedient.

I thought that your temptations resulted entirely from your fear that you would not be sent to the missions. Do not be afraid, it was for this purpose that your superior received you and she will not assign you to a work that is contrary to your vocation and the end for which you entered and were received. It would have been more perfect for you to submit blindly. If your superior sometimes said things to you that seemed to indicate the contrary, she probably did so to try you.

Humble yourself and remain at peace in your vocation.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

LETTERS TO LOUISE DES LOGES

8

Letter Eight

1844

Vol. 6, p. 131

J. M. J.

My dear Sister Aurelia:

You are quite justified in complaining about my silence but wrong in the conclusions you draw. I have already explained my reasons to the good Mother Superior and also to the wicked Sister Paula. I now want to explain to you more fully the reasons why I did not write especially at the beginning. I considered it absolutely necessary that you should all become detached from everyone outside your community and should become deeply attached to your own society, its spirit and its rules. I also wished that you should be guided exclusively by those who are fitted to impart to you that spirit and perfect you in it.

If I had told you this a long time ago, it would have caused you great sorrow and could have been the occasion of strong temptations. On the other hand, if I kept silence, your sorrow would not be sudden but would be spread out over a period, arising only occasionally and thus causing in you no ill effect. Its only effect would be that of detaching you from, and making you dissatisfied with me.

To act thus was hard for me, but the good which I foresaw would result from this dissatisfaction (which, I don't doubt, you have tried in your heart to fight) was so great as not to allow me to miss such an opportunity. I knew that the more you became detached from and displeased with me, so much the more would you attach yourself to those who would henceforth guide you to holiness, and would also find your joy in a life of faithful observance of your rule and its spirit.

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

I can assure you that these were the motives of my delay in writing to you. To act thus was rather cruel on my part but I was motivated solely by my interest in your soul's sanctification. Profit from this, I beg you, so that you may be more confirmed in the spirit of your vocation, and more closely attached to the way of life laid down for you and your Sisters by divine goodness. Be guided solely by your rule and by those who have acquired the true spirit of that rule. Do not allow yourselves to be influenced by those outside your congregation, even though you may have great confidence in such people and they, on their part, in the charity of God, be much interested in you.

I was greatly consoled to hear that Our Lord helps you to bear your crosses. Be humbly submissive to the divine will which crucifies you; love the hand of God that leads you with such severity. Have courage, this present life is nothing. The sorrows we suffer here pass quickly; this life is only a painful dream which will be followed by a joyful awakening. The more you suffer, the more detached you will become from yourselves and the world. This, at least, should be your aim.

You will learn your true value and how little you can trust yourselves, you will come to realize that your hopes must rest exclusively in God, in the grace of Jesus Christ, and in the goodness of Mary. You will then be profoundly humble and will depend on God alone. Have courage, God's mercy towards you is great and in His mercy you will find the justification for full confidence with regard to your sanctification and salvation. When darkness and pain surround you, do not trust your feelings nor allow yourself to be influenced by depression or images of the imagination. Let your judgments be based on those of your superiors and practise perfect obedience.

LETTERS TO LOUISE DES LOGES

You see then that God wishes you to practise perfect self-renunciation. That is why He places you on the Cross. Once you have arrived at complete abnegation, all, or at least a great part, of your pains will disappear. Do not be occupied with self and avoid self-pity always. Turn your mind away from thoughts about your own state. Be content to abandon yourself to Jesus and Mary with complete confidence, and allow the superiors whom God has given you to guide you like a little child.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

9

Letter Nine *December* , 1844 *Vol. 6, p. 464*

J. M. J.

Dear Sister Aurelia:

You see how much consolation comes to those who are united in the charity of Jesus Christ. When they suffer they find mutual consolation since each one shares the sufferings of the other; or rather, on the occasion of their mutual sympathy, it is Jesus Christ Who, in His divine charity, becomes the consolation of each.

On the occasion of the recent losses of the poor peoples of Guinea, your good and charitable hearts, by the touching sentiments with which Our Lord has inspired you, have desired to comfort me. Continue your prayers to the Divine Master, beseeching Him to have pity on the wretchedness of so many millions of souls who are in danger of being lost

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because there is no one to help them. Since you yourselves cannot go there, be with them in spirit and try to save them by your prayers. I do not forget them. I cannot get them out of my mind from the time eight months ago when I foresaw what would happen to them. I tried by every means in my power to prevent the blow, but God's hand is omnipotent and all my efforts were useless. Not one of my letters reached our missionaries. When God has decreed a thing our efforts to the contrary are futile. May His holy name be blessed and may His will be done!

Divine goodness has seen fit to hear our prayers for Father Tisserant; he has recovered his health or at any rate there is no longer any danger, and his convalescence will be shorter than expected. Pray always for Haiti. It seems that Our Lord wishes to save that country through Father Tisserant. He is a child of the Holy Heart of Mary and this good Mother leads him by the hand.

Do not think that I forget you and the other Sisters. If I do not write often, it is because I believe that the direction given them at the convent of Castres is more useful for their souls. It would be harmful to be directed, at the same time, by two different directors. And what more can I wish through the charity of Jesus Christ than the sanctification of your souls? That is why, while remembering you before God, I chose to remain silent.

I have no fears with regard to the present interior state of your soul. This state will not last always, nor, I believe, even much longer. You have passed through a very serious spiritual crisis. Many souls when they reach that point, either yield to discouragement, scruples and interior anxiety or they go to the opposite extreme—laxity. Obedience saved you. Our Lord, while allowing you to pass through that sorrowful state, has upheld you. A person in that state is like one suspended by a single hair over a precipice. In our case, how-

LETTERS TO LOUISE DES LOGES

ever, it is the hand of Jesus Christ that holds that hair and thus what seems but a hair becomes a thick cable which the combined efforts of the demons cannot cut.

Souls who are in this state and accept it in the right spirit, benefit greatly. It is necessary for us in order that our souls may be established in solid perfection. From it we pass on to a state of peace, calm and stability. As a rule we are then no longer carried away by fiery sentiments. Everything is more mild, gentle and calm. Sometimes there is but little feeling but the soul belongs more purely to God.

Strive then, my dear Sister, to profit by this state of soul which is a means to your greater sanctification. Such a state of soul is rather common and its fruits in the souls which God draws to Himself are solid and permanent. Consider yourself blessed to be able to suffer thus for the love of God; remain at peace in the midst of all these pains, submit humbly to God's good pleasure, prostrate yourself before Him and allow Him to do with you and in you whatever He wishes. Be humble and little before Him and all His creatures, and especially in your own eyes. Esteem yourself blessed when you suffer some deep humiliation. If pride rebels, bow your head and abase yourself before Our Divine Lord. Be faithful to your mental prayer and your exercises of piety. You will accomplish much just by remaining in God's presence and casting a glance towards Him from time to time. Your mental prayer can be judged by its fruits. Do not ask God for crosses but bear those sent you.

Remain prostrate before the Divine Master and at rest. Be very obedient, have a sweet gaiety, and be mild and peaceful in your conduct. Be moderate in everything and never do anything with the aim of standing out among others. With regard to your exterior conduct lead a simple common life. Interiorly, be completely dead to self. Do not be preoccupied with self but remain in all simplicity before God, not re-

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

flecting on yourself very often. Do nothing to attract the attention of others to you, whether favorable or unfavorable. Live at peace with yourself and your companions. Be unaffectedly humble and submissive to God and His servants, your dear Mother and Sisters.

Do not forget to recommend me to your Sisters.

I leave you in the peace of Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

LETTERS TO ROSE LAPIQUE

II. LETTERS TO ROSE LAPIQUE (SISTER PAULE)

Rose Lapique was one of the five girls who desired to engage in the apostolate to the Negro. She entered the Convent of the Blue Nuns of Castres and took the name of Sister Paule.

10

Letter One

1842

Vol. 4, p. 228

Rule Proposed to Rose Lapique (before she entered the convent)

- 5:00 Rising. Give your heart to God immediately on rising. Offer Him your day and prepare to serve Him faithfully. Homage to Mary. Clean your room. If you have time after this, prepare the subject of your mental prayer and remain recollected and at peace. Avoid being tense and over-eager.
- 5:30 Mental Prayer. Spend fifteen minutes kneeling and the next fifteen standing; or else sit and kneel alternately. Follow the affections of your heart, make good resolutions and place them in the hands of Mary. Spiritual Bouquet.
- 6:15 Manual Labor until Holy Mass. Be peacefully recollected during your work. Do not be tense and over-eager, for such strain usually comes from self-love and tends to lead you away from God. After Mass, manual labor or breakfast, according to the rule of the house. After breakfast, manual labor.
- 10:00 Visit to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Virgin. Follow this with a reading from the life of a saint. Read calmly with piety and affection and make good resolutions.
- 11:00 Manual Labor
- 12:15 Particular Examen concerning your principal fault. If it is convenient, make this exercise in church and,

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

at the beginning, recite the Litanies of the Holy Name of Jesus. After dinner take recreation.

1:45 Spiritual Reading

2:15 Manual Labor

3:00 Visit to the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin

3:15 Manual Labor

4:15 Beads

4:30 Read the Life of a Saint.

5:15 Visit to the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin

5:30 Manual Labor. Spiritual Reading for a quarter of an hour before supper. Supper with the community. Recreation. Evening Prayers. After that read attentively the subject for the following morning's mental prayer.

9:00 Go to bed. Do this modestly, recalling some pious or thought, as for example, Our Lord stretched on the

9:15 Cross or lying in His tomb, or the Child Jesus in His crib. Go to sleep in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

11

Letter Two La Neuville, May 6, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 230

J. M. J.

My good Sister:

I knew that you would find happiness in the Community to which the good Lord has brought you. It is thus that Our Lord's designs are gradually accomplished. Do your best to prepare yourself for the great ministry for which God has destined you. I do not need to recommend docility and obedience to you as you already know their importance. I trust that our good Master will give you the grace to practice them perfectly.

LETTERS TO ROSE LAPIQUE

Adopt fully the spirit of the holy Congregation of which you are a member and be like soft wax in the hands of your superiors that they may mold you accordingly. Let your heart be filled with love for Our Lord who is so full of mercy and love for you, and be generous at all times in making the sacrifices He demands of you. Be always ready for a life of sacrifice, living as one who is dead to self so that the life of Jesus may dwell in you. His life will be truly in you if you have no desires, no will of your own, but make His love your only desire and His Will your will. Replace self-love with the love of Jesus, Who is at the right hand of the Father, Who lives in His divine Sacrament and in the person of your Superiors and your Sisters.

Be humble and, even in spiritual things, avoid vainglory. Do not long for certain graces, nor adopt certain practices, or talk in spiritual tones in order to make others esteem and love you. Jesus alone and His divine love must be the end and purpose of all your actions. Do not become self-complacent when you become aware of the presence of divine grace in your soul. Do not be worried or discouraged when you notice that you lack the graces you see in others and which you would like to have. Do not desire to reach a high degree in the order of grace, but remain in your lowliness before God and accept with gratitude, like a beggar, whatever He wishes to give you, esteeming yourself unworthy to receive all these favors.

Try only to be faithful to that good Master and to increase your love for Him from day to day. Think how fortunate you are that others suffer you in the house of God and realize sincerely, in the presence of God, that you are the last and most unworthy among your Sisters. Guard against any external manifestation of extraordinary humility lest this might lead to vanity and to the conducting of yourself in such a way as to lead others to think that you are humble.

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Act like the other Sisters and hide your humility in your heart, as well as the graces which God in His goodness gives to you.

Be quite open and straightforward in your relations with your Superiors. Do not hide anything from your good Mother and the Mistress of novices; tell her everything whether good or bad, and do so without circumlocution, exaggeration, or explanation. In your relations with your Sisters be charitable, mild, kind and attentive and in everything avoid affectation.

Shun particular friendships like a plague; they are ruinous to a community and fatal to devotion. Love all your Sisters with a pure and holy charity like that which Jesus has for you. Love your confessor as you do Christ, your superior as the Blessed Virgin and your Sisters as you love the Saints in heaven, and always let this love be pure and holy.

Do not be over-eager or strain after piety. Such straining is usually the result of self-love or vanity or springs from the natural satisfaction we get from piety. Accept from God whatever He gives you and do not fail to profit by it. If He leaves you spiritually dry, accept this as His holy Will. Therefore do not make efforts of mind or heart to remain recollected or to produce affections for, or good sentiments towards Our Lord. Allow our good Master to lead you. Have a fervent devotion for Mary since you are her child in a special way. I ask that good Mother to be your mistress and guide and to see that her beloved Son accomplish in you all that I have mentioned in this short letter.

In the meantime, I am, in their most holy love,

Your very humble servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Missionary of the Holy Heart
of Mary

LETTERS TO ROSE LAPIQUE

12

Letter Three

(June or July) 1843

Vol. 4, p. 232

J. M. J.

My dear Sister :

You were justified in concluding that I had forgotten you ; and yet this was not, in fact, the case.

Make good use of the precious time that is given to you in the novitiate. Profit by the good example you have before your eyes and the good advice you receive constantly from your good Mother (Superior). It is very important that you should be courageous in making the sacrifices which God demands of you. Be at peace and have confidence in God. If you are not reassured about your sanctification by what you find in yourself, put your trust in God's mercy and in your good mother Mary. You know that the good Lord wants to help you, for has He not made you experience in advance how sweet it is to consecrate yourself to Him.

During these three months you are an apprentice learning to act as you will have to do throughout your life. Try to perform your function as well as possible, while at the same time remaining recollected interiorly. Do not, however, in your effort to remain recollected, lose sight of the task set you. The most important thing is to do the function which God has given you. Being recollected is simply a means of making you more pleasing to God in your work.

Your most humble servant in Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Letter Four

August, 1843

Vol. 4, p. 305

J. M. J.

Dear Sister :

Your heart is filled with joy (because you have received the habit). You are now wearing the uniform of Our Lord and therefore you belong to Him to be His handmaid. All that remains now is that you become His spouse and this too will be accomplished through His grace and mercy. Act like Mary, who, calling herself the humblest and poorest of God's handmaids, became the spouse of the Divine Spirit and the mother of the Son.

Be humble, docile, obedient, charitable, mild and pliable. Let your gratitude for all God's kindness lead you to be filled with love for Him. Be recollected, industrious in the work and functions confided to you, and at peace in your soul. Try to do well whatever work is given to you because you are working for God's glory. Nevertheless, while wishing to do all things well, do not worry about their success but accept God's will and remain humbly and peacefully at His feet. Try to do all things well, but trust entirely in the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ alone.

May the peace of Jesus and Mary be with you. Do not be surprised that you have worries. Your vocation has to be tried and tested.

Your entirely devoted servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Missionary of the Holy Heart
of Mary

LETTERS TO ROSE LAPIQUE

14

Letter Five

July 30—August 3, 1845

Vol. 7, p. 258

J. M. J.

My dear Sister :

I admire your heroic charity. Your frankness was going to betray you, but your charity immediately restrained it. When I read your first words, I said to myself, "I am going to be taken to task!" Your charity, however, has considerably spared my weakness. And now I, in my turn, want to be frank and to say, in all truthfulness, that I was not worthy of such consideration. That I am very guilty is quite certain. I can only ask for your mercy and I feel sure that you and all the others will grant it to me, and that the word of Our Lord will be fulfilled in you: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

This does not mean that I do not wish to excuse myself and to show that I am not at fault, but not having enough imagination to conceive an excuse I am forced to admit that I am really at fault. I think that you will more readily believe me when I say this than if I gave you fine excuses. But I see that this word makes you smile since you, seeing before you a man who could not resist the desire to excuse himself, are now quite prepared to be incredulous. However, it is really true that there was something that prevented me from following the desire of my heart and that was my embarrassment at the thought of discouraging you. I was embarrassed that I could not offer you any definite and positive reasons for hope either with regard to a place or a definite time (for your departure for the missions). I was afraid to discourage you on account of the pains we have suffered and the difficulties we have met on all sides.

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

If, as each pain or difficulty presented itself, I had told you of it, you would have had one sorrow after another, one discouragement after another. Now that, as a result of my wicked conduct, you are in a state of holy and generous anger or, if you prefer, indignation, and your soul is completely free and detached from all creatures and perfectly dependent on and submissive to God's will, I can tell you all I wish. My words will no longer discourage you and whatever I say will only raise your hopes. I leave it to your good Mother to tell you how things stand; she will remind you that we have to wait patiently if we want to "become Negroes (to the Negro)."

I have sent to the good Mother printed copies of the letters of our missionaries in Bourbon, and this will prove to you that I have not abandoned all interest in you. These letters will give you a better understanding of these poor Negroes who are so wretched because no one goes to their rescue. I know that this will make you all the more eager to fly to their assistance and that you will suffer more because you are cooped up in your convent in France. To add to your torment, I am enclosing with the letters a note that shows the good dispositions of the Negroes of Haiti, that, being thus tormented, you will pray fervently to God and will clamor so loudly that He will finally open the door for you.

Here now is some advice I wished to give you regarding this. Act as spoiled children do, imitate their pleading with their mother who finds it impossible to refuse them anything. Be convinced that Haiti is yours; but have patience; patience, I tell you, always practice patience! This is the great virtue of a future Negress. We must wait until our poor Haitians stop their brutal savagery.

You may say, no doubt, that even this time I am late in replying to your letters, but the reason for that is that I had

LETTERS TO ROSE LAPIQUE

five letters to write. Ask your good Mother not to allow all four of you to write to me at the same time. She will thus spare me the embarrassment of being late in my replies. You have no idea how people sometimes disturb me. My letter to Mother Superior was written on July 22; yours, begun on the 30th was finished on August 3rd. When I have only two or three letters to write to your house and a letter arrives which demands an immediate answer, I put off replying to it until I have finished the two or three letters to you. But I could not do this if I had five letters to write to you, since this would delay too long the urgent letter. This will explain why you have had to wait for your letters. You will say to yourself: "Here is a man who is worried and wants to excuse himself. This shows that he feels guilty." It also shows that he is sorry for his fault!

Pray to God for me and for all of us.

Your most humble servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Priest of the Holy Heart
of Mary

15

Letter Six

(October 24) 1847

Vol. 9, p. 300

Jesus, Mary, Joseph

My dear Sister:

No doubt you are very angry, but your anger is also a holy anger! You wrote to me on June 19 and you had not then received a reply to your letter of October which you were so anxious to get. You will not be displeased with me when

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

you learn the reason for my silence, and especially when you read the good news I send you. I did not want to reply earlier because I would have had to give you distressing news and I had still hope.

At the time of your letter, I learned that Bishop Truffet, who knew nothing about your community, had applied elsewhere for help. He had not made any final arrangements and it was possible to postpone his plans so as not to prevent your departure. However, I was afraid that all our plans, especially with regard to Guinea, might be upset.

Yesterday the answer came. Everything is settled. If you are ready you will be on board ship in a fortnight. What do you say about that, dear Sister? I am sure that you are all upset.

My task now is to preach serious sermons to you. In the past I preached patience to you; now I must preach peace, calm, and moderation. Until the time of your departure try to keep recollected, so that you may draw down God's blessing on you.

My dear Sister, you are now full of great joy, and I am afraid that you might allow yourself to be excessively carried away by it. So, to balance things, I am going to make a confession of your sins to you. I am sure that you will not mind but on the contrary will be pleased. However, this pleasure will cause you to direct your attention more to your interior life and thus prevent frivolity that might result from your joy.

My dear Sister, your character is too much inclined to pride, and might lead you to lack complete submissiveness to the judgment of your superior. You, perhaps, make unfavorable judgments about your Sisters and even about your superiors. You might also put too much trust in yourself and be too forward in your relations with your Sisters, and might be inclined to act haughtily.

LETTERS TO ROSE LAPIQUE

I accuse you, also, of being a bit rigid by nature, and this might cause you to cling too stubbornly to your own ideas, to be somewhat harsh with your Sisters. It is possible that you are brusque with those to whom you should be kind, as for example with the children you have to instruct, etc. The result of this might be that you are firm to the point of a little rudeness, and harsh in the way you cling to your own will.

I accuse you of being somewhat wanting in religious modesty in your behavior. You are, by nature, a little too much of a tomboy. You are inclined to be violent, vivacious, and haughty. You will never be able to get rid of these habits completely, and this does not worry me, because they will give you a motive for humbling yourself when you realize that in the eyes of men you will never seem a perfect religious. However, in the eyes of God, you will not be the poorer for that, so long as you try to be humble and meek of heart.

Poor Sister! What a dressing down I have given you! If you were not my beloved daughter in Our Lord, I should not use such language to you. If I cause you to suffer, it is but the beginning of your sorrows. You will meet with other troubles. You must be humiliated, bruised and broken under the hand of God, while all the time your soul remains at peace and in submission.

If you need any explanations or advice regarding the points I have mentioned, let me know, but mention the particular point explicitly, as you will realize that I could not possibly remember all the things I have told you.

Your most devoted father and servant,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN

III. LETTER TO SISTERS PAULE, AURELIA,
ALOYSIA AND CECILE

Amiens, June 2, 1847

Vol. 9, p. 161

J. M. J.

My dear Sisters:

It gives me great pleasure to be able to send you Father Bessieux, recently returned from Guinea, who will speak to you about our beloved Negroes, and will show you how great is their wretchedness and want. He will at the same time tell you about the trials and difficulties associated with the work. I feel sure that your hearts are very sad because you are unable to go immediately to help so many unfortunate souls who are perishing because none are found to give them help.

Still, I do not doubt that you have placed your good wishes in the hands of Mary, and that you are waiting with confidence, peace and humility, until it pleases divine Goodness to make use of you in the service of those wretched souls. His divine Providence will arrange everything for the best and will inspire your good Mother to send you, if it be God's will. It is for you to remain in your readiness before God.

Do you remember the laborers of whom Jesus spoke in the Gospel? They did not go to the field of the father of the family until they were sent. Those who remained idle until the last hour, had an excellent answer for the lord who asked them why they remained idle: "No one has hired us for the work." They were ready and anxious to work but they waited until he employed them. They were called at the last hour and received a reward for the whole day.

LETTER TO SEVERAL SISTERS

Be at peace, therefore, training your souls in all the religious virtues. Wait until the divine voice tells you to go and then march on. Do not force God, as it were, to accept your services and especially before the time determined in His eternal decrees. He is the Master, you are the servants. A servant does not force her mistress to give her one particular job, but is ready to do the work her mistress chooses for her and at the time her mistress gives her the order. Now that job, the souls you want to belong to Him, is God's work, and by helping them you serve His glory. Hence it is solely in His interest and for His glory that you desire to work. It belongs to Him to give the orders; it is your task to obey.

If He considers it proper to wait, you cannot question His decision, but must wait also. When He waits patiently, you must act likewise. Surely you will not say that you are more eager to serve His glory than He is Himself? Do you imagine that you love souls more and have greater compassion for their misery than God?

I do not think you make such claims. But I am not thinking about that; I am preaching to converts. Hence, I will content myself with praying for your perseverance in humility, peace, patience, complete submission to the divine will, and abandonment of your entire selves with all your desires, affections and dispositions to Jesus and Mary, in whose charity I am,

Your most devoted servant,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Priest of the Holy Heart of Mary

IV. LETTERS TO MISS ADELE BRUGES (SISTER ALOYSIA)

Adele Bruges was one of the girls who, like Louise des Loges, Rose Lapique, and Pauline Bernard came to the Shrine of Our Lady of Victories in Paris, with the desire of entering religious life and laboring on behalf of the Negro Missions. She eventually became acquainted with Father Libermann who directed her to the newly-founded Society of the Immaculate Conception of Castres. His summing up of her character is contained in his letter to the Mother Superior of the Society (May 5, 1843): "She is lively, always laughing, yet modest. Her character is excellent and she is well disposed to piety."

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Letter One Paris, Feast of All Saints, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 417

My dear Sister:

I was convinced, before my departure from Amiens, that you would be happy and satisfied once you were settled in the place where Divine Providence wants you. Rejoice with all your heart because God's goodness has chosen you from among so many, to be used for the salvation of souls and especially for those who are so wretched and so badly neglected.

You are now in a holy solitude where you have to prepare yourself for that great work. The holier you are, the greater will be your capacity for serving God and saving souls. Endeavor therefore to sanctify yourself during the time you are cut off from the world. Your favorite virtues during the novitiate must be humility, mildness, charity, the spirit of prayer, and crowning all, obedience. If you practice these

LETTERS TO ADELE BRUGES

virtues during your novitiate they will produce rich fruits at a later date. Love Our Lord with all your heart and with generosity. Sacrifice for Him all that is agreeable to you. When troubled by pain or temptation, bear them with love, peace and patience. Open your heart with simplicity and confidence to your superiors and you will always find consolation.

Be a child of God in the house of your Heavenly Father and in the midst of God's other children. Love all your Sisters equally. Console and sustain those who suffer. Do not attach yourself to anyone in particular, but let the affection of your heart be for all.

Always maintain and strengthen the spirit of your vocation. Do not make comparisons between the house you have left and the one to which the good Lord has brought you. Forget the past and consider yourself as belonging to this house. Attach yourself to it and adopt its spirit.

I saw Mr. Topping recently and he asked me for news of you. It is possible that I am not replying to what you wrote in your letter because I am now in Paris and have not your letter with me. I did not have time to reply sooner nor to pay a visit to the good Sisters of the Holy Family.

I leave you in the peace of Jesus and Mary. May the blessings and the love of Our Lord and His Holy Mother increase in your soul.

Your most humble servant in Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Postscript to Another Letter *undated* *Vol. 4, p. 418*

My dear Sister :

It is too late now to reply to your letter. It is probable that the circumstances are no longer the same with regard to the matter that concerned your parents.

The fact that you are still wearing worldly clothes will make your good Sisters jealous of you. However, I don't doubt that your heart has no share in the world even though your clothes resemble it. Forget the world and all it contains more and more. God alone must take the place of everything else. We lose nothing when we give up the world to enter into the possession of God.

Worldings would readily give a handful of sand in exchange for a piece of gold. Have courage, my dear Sister! I see that you are satisfied and peaceful and so much the better. But you cannot expect to have fair weather all the time; a day will come when you will meet with storms. Don't let that worry you. Pains and crosses which are inevitable during the novitiate, will purify your soul, detach it from itself, strengthen it in the way of God, and purify your vocation. The Holy Spirit tells us in the Scriptures: "My child, prepare your soul for temptation." Be faithful to your God and be humble, obedient and adaptable. Desire to be perfect, be generous, have the spirit of sacrifice, and be faithful in little things.

I have not yet received positive news about our missionaries of Guinea. No ship has yet returned since they arrived.

May the peace of Jesus and Mary be with you.

Your most devoted servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

LETTERS TO ADELE BRUGES

19

Letter Three Feast of St. Aloysius, 1844 Vol. 6, p. 243

J. M. J.

My dear Sister Aloysia:

I am very glad that at long last I am able to address you by this name, and you really deserve it. Our Lord gave you a great grace when He made you feel so great happiness in His divine service. Advance constantly in purity of heart, in simplicity in all your conduct, in forgetfulness of the world and of self, in love of God, in zeal for your sanctification and the sanctification of others. Imitate your holy Patron in his fervent love for Jesus and Mary. Let your mind be receptive, adaptable and unresisting to the Will of God as made known to you by your superiors and in any other way that God chooses. From now on your own will must be submerged and God's will must take its place. What a happiness!

Strive for great purity in what you desire and do not allow self-love or any other evil motive to mar or taint anything you do. Never desire anything except what God may desire. This is the means of obtaining the fulfillment of your good desires. When we allow our desires to drive us on forcibly, we rarely have peace of soul and our intention is rarely pure. Do your best to remain calm and peaceful in God's sight at all times. He is the Lord of your soul; let Him do what He wishes with His property; remain prostrate and at peace before Him. Have peace of soul but also a great spirit of love and humility. Approach God with love and never allow fear to trouble your soul. You are a child of God, of the family of Mary, and fear is out of the question in their company. Love alone must be the prevailing element in your

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

soul and it must enter into all your actions. All that has happened in the past should teach you to love, praise and bless Him Who has never, for one moment, ceased to overwhelm you with gracious favors, and Who desires to give you even greater graces.

When vexations, temptations and pains, whether interior or exterior come, remain calm, adaptable, docile and submissive in the presence of the God of mercy. Remain prostrate before Him and allow Him to do whatever He pleases with you.

Realize fully that no one owes you anything and that therefore it is not possible for anyone to offend you. You have given your soul to Jesus Christ and soon, all that you are and all that you have must belong entirely to Jesus. Already now you must act as if this were so, thus preparing for the holy life which one day you will lead. Because of this you must no longer call anything your own. Everything you have belongs to Jesus Christ, and therefore, no one can now really offend you. Since Jesus, then, is the owner of your soul, leave to Him the care of defending His property. Instead of being preoccupied with yourself, think only of pleasing Him, the Lord to Whom you belong.

In your ordinary conduct do not be occupied with yourself, nor wish others to be occupied with you. All your desires must be that you and others should live for Jesus and be occupied with Him. Desire that He may look with complacency and love on your soul, and this will be much more profitable for you than winning the good opinions of creatures. My dear Sister, these are the graces I will constantly beseech Our Lord to grant to you and to the good Sisters whom I always remember.

Please tell this to Sisters Paule, Aurelia, and Cecilia. I made a rash promise when I told you that I would come in the month of May. I see now that our only promise ought

LETTERS TO ADELE BRUGES

to be to do the will of our heavenly Father. It is He Who prevents me from keeping my promise and it is His right to do so for I did not ask whether He agreed. I hope, however, that I shall be able to visit you at a later date. Oh! how great is my desire to see you all!

Your very humble and devoted servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Missionary of the Holy Heart
of Mary

**V. LETTER TO MOTHER MACRINE
(OR MAKRENA)**

In a letter to Father Thévaux and the community of King George Sound, Australia, in 1847, Father Libermann wrote:

I have to tell you about another grace which Mary obtained for our Congregation and especially for the benefit of Father Blanpin. This good confrere had completely lost the use of his voice and had been compelled to return to Europe. At the beginning of October he had the good fortune to meet two missionary Bishops, Most Rev. Pompalier and Bishop Luquet. They pitied his sad condition and advised him to visit and ask the prayers of a saintly Basilian religious named Mother Makrena.

Mother Makrena had been abbess of a Basilian convent at Minsk in Poland. By order of the Russian Emperor, she had been kept in prison for seven years because of her fidelity to the Catholic Faith. The scars with which her body is covered bear witness to the tortures she underwent. There were about thirty religious with her. Almost all died as a result of their tortures and the others remained lame, blind, etc., for life. Only three survived by a miracle. Mother Makrena suffered more than all the others. She managed to escape by jumping from a high wall when her guardians were in a drunken stupor. She journeyed on foot in the middle of winter through the great forests of Poland and eventually reached Rome. She has been living in a convent of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart.

Mother Makrena told Father Blanpin to kneel before a picture of the Most Holy Virgin which had been blessed by Pope Pius IX just a few days before. She told him to say prayers for ten days. On the tenth day there was no sign of improvement and Father went back to Mother Makrena and told her so. She scolded him for his lack of faith, made him kneel before the same picture and told him to pronounce the Holy Names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph with all his might. He made an effort and pronounced them with a voice that was a little loud but extremely weak. She then rose and told him that he would

LETTER TO MOTHER MACRINE

be cured and ordered him to repeat the Holy Names every hour of the day. His voice became a little stronger.

He went once more to see Mother Makrena at four o'clock and found her kneeling before the picture of the Blessed Virgin in a sort of ecstasy. Moved by respect and religious fervor, Father Blanpin knelt beside her. After a few moments and in the presence of several people she ordered him to kneel on her prie-dieu and told him to pronounce the holy Name of Jesus. Our confrere was completely cured.

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La Neuville, January 3, 1847

Vol. 9, p. 11

Dear Reverend Mother :

You have been most kind to take such an interest in my dear confrere, Father Blanpin, and divine Goodness has deigned to grant him a wonderful favor as a result of your prayers. Hence it is my duty to write and express to you our heartfelt gratitude, first to Jesus Christ our good Lord and the Most Holy Virgin our well-beloved Mother, and then to you who are so devoted to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary and whom God has so inspired with full confidence in His divine Mercy and with such admirable charity towards our poor confrere. Through your trust and charity the blessing of God has come upon him and he has been given back the power of speech which, henceforth, will belong to Jesus Christ and will be used solely for His glory and that of Mary His Holy Mother.

The favor of the marvellous cure granted to Father Blanpin has profoundly touched my heart. But the thing that gives me even greater joy and which I esteem even more highly than the physical cure, is the interior grace which must have

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

accompanied it and the fervor which will, no doubt, result from the knowledge of your faith and charity which on the occasion of his cure was revealed to Father Blanpin by Divine Providence.

I hope, dear reverend Mother, that those graces will bear fruits of salvation and blessing, and that your words so full of piety and love of God, will strengthen him more and more and increase and perfect the virtues which God's goodness had already implanted in his soul, a soul that, before that time, was merely longing to belong to Him entirely. Those words will encourage him in the resolution to sacrifice himself completely to God's glory and the salvation of souls.

So, once more, accept my sincere thanks for all your kindness towards our dear confrere and your continual interest in him. It is not possible for us to repay you for the blessing you have got for us and for this Father. All I can do is to pray and make others pray for your unhappy country, Poland. We have been praying for a long time and with great fervor for this beloved and so deeply afflicted part of God's Church. We will continue to unite our prayers to yours. We hope that God will have compassion on His poor children, and mercifully aid them in their intense sufferings and save them from the great danger of being lost.

May we ask you, dear Reverend Mother, to take an interest in the souls which divine mercy has entrusted to our care? I am sure that Father Blanpin spoke to you on behalf of these poor peoples (the Negroes). I take the liberty of repeating his request that you join your prayers and labors to ours and thus draw down God's blessings on us.

Pray that we may remain faithful to all the graces God gives us, and that we may work fervently and fruitfully in that part of the vineyard in which the Father of the Christian Family employs us.

LETTER TO MOTHER MACRINE

Accept this expression of gratitude for the great charity with which God has filled your heart in our behalf, and believe that I am,

Your most humble and devoted servant in Jesus Christ,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN,
Superior of the Missionaries of
the Holy Heart of Mary

VI. LETTERS TO MOTHER MARIE DE VILLENEUVE, SUPERIOR OF THE CONVENT OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, CASTRES

It might be best to recall what Father Libermann himself wrote in a letter to Father Frederic Le Vavasseur on October, 1842, regarding the Sisters of Castres (the so-called Blue Nuns) and their Superior, Mother Mary de Villeneuve:

When Father Tisserant was temporarily engaged in work for the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Victories in Paris, several devout young women who seemed capable, fervent, generous and of solid piety, came to consult him. This confrere told me that it was extraordinary that these ladies should come to offer themselves with the desire of becoming religious and working for the benefit of the Negro women. Father Tisserant accepted them and spoke to me about the possibility of forming a Congregation which would be the counterpart of our own. I was not at all in favor of the idea of establishing and caring for a Congregation of religious women. Soon afterwards, Father Bessieux told me that there was a society in his part of the country, which had been founded four years before and which had the same end in view. He also told me that the Superior of this new Congregation was a capable woman and that she led a very interior life.

21

Letter One La Neuville, October 8, 1842 Vol. 3, p. 311

My dear Reverend Sister:

Father Bessieux, who became a member of our little society, spoke to me about your Institute and your zeal for the poor neglected souls for whom God has called us to labor.

LETTERS TO MOTHER MARIE DE VILLENEUVE

I was greatly consoled when I learned about your project and I pray with all my heart that the good Master may bless you in the good desires with which He has inspired you. I have longed for a Congregation of this kind for a long time and that is my reason for writing to you for some information regarding the fundamental end and purpose of your foundation.

Father Bessieux gave me a few notes but they did not contain the essential information I was looking for. I have a reason for seeking more detailed information. Several ladies who are fervent and capable, have offered to consecrate themselves to the salvation of young Negro girls and, in general, to work especially for the Negroes, who are so wretched from every point of view. If the end of your Institute corresponds with the aims of these generous persons, they might perhaps be admitted as members of your young society and could be of great help to you in establishing that holy work.

May I ask you, therefore, for clear information regarding the end and purpose you have in view, what means you intend to use, what spirit you wish to impart to your associates, and how you propose to prepare them for the works and functions so proper to so noble a vocation. May I remark that very great care is required in the formation of your candidates in the holiness which is so necessary for that holy state.

I realize that it is not possible for me to express myself properly in a letter. There are many questions I should like to ask, but not because of curiosity nor because I am distrustful. Our Lord has given you too many graces and favors to admit of distrust on my part; but I should like to be better informed regarding some points that need clarification.

I presume, my reverend Sister, that you will tell me that there are a number of questions to which you cannot give precise answers. This does not surprise me for, as a rule, God's works unfold and develop gradually, little by little.

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

You have started the building. It does not belong to us, weak creatures, to finish it, but to Our Lord. He has placed you there as the first stone and it is possible that you may not know exactly what He has in store for you. This is God's way, usually, with the souls on whose foundation He desires to erect any work whatsoever for the glory of His Father.

If this is so in your case, and if such be the will of God, I should like to make the following proposal. We could gather these four or five women, who are all around thirty years of age, and place them in a novitiate at Amiens. It might be possible to buy a house there and make a foundation. If you agreed to this it would be necessary to place there two or three of your most fervent and capable religious to make arrangements for the foundation. A plan for the novitiate could then be made and some rules laid down for the life of the religious who would be sent to foreign lands.

In proposing this I am presuming that you have not yet evolved a clear plan and have not yet established a Rule. If, on the contrary, you have already regulated these matters, please let me know what has been decided. I should have liked to visit you in Castres but this is not possible.

Please examine my proposal before God. Ask the help of Mary, our good and most holy Mother. Let us not seek any other interest than that of our Master and our heavenly Father, who alone must reap glory from all our labors and desires.

Respectfully yours in sincere charity,

Your most humble and devoted servant in the Most Holy and Immaculate Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Letter Two La Neuville, October 24, 1842 Vol. 3, p. 323

J. M. J.

Dear Mother Superior:

Father Bessieux has further explained to me the nature of your work and it shows me that I was wrongly informed about the state of your Congregation. In the two previous talks I had about it with Father Bessieux, Divine Providence permitted him to explain things badly to me. In view of his further explanations I feel that it is God's will that I should write to you again to correct the mistake of my last letter.

As I told you, Reverend Mother, several ladies have offered to consecrate themselves to the apostolate to the Negroes. They are capable, docile, generous souls and of solid piety. Before I learned of the existence of your Society I had consented to the keen wishes of my confreres to establish a Congregation which would serve the same purpose. I was as keen as they for the establishing of such a Congregation but I was afraid of taking on this new burden. I felt that the foundation of our own society of missionaries was itself beyond my powers. Still because of the providential way in which these ladies offered themselves, I could not resist the divine will, but waited hoping to receive greater light on the subject.

Then, like a ray of light, came Father Bessieux who spoke to me of your Society. As I knew little about your work, I was under the false impression that you had just begun and that nothing was yet clearly fixed or determined. Hence my last letter. Now I have learned that your Constitutions are already drawn up and have approval from the late Bishop of Alby. Other things which I have learned about your Congregation also pleased me.

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

This made me all the more anxious to get a more complete account of your Congregation, your Constitutions, and the spirit of your Sisters. That is why I once more urge you to establish a house in Amiens. I am grateful to Our Lord Jesus Christ because He has seen fit to acquaint me with the work of your Society before I had tried to establish a similar one in those foreign lands.

I entreat you, reverend Mother, not to hinder the desire I have to see these ladies enter as members of your Society. If we were to begin here the same sort of Society that you are developing in the South, the two societies would be mutually harmful. It is possible that the good Master may give me the grace to help in some way in strengthening your Society. Consider well before Our Lord Jesus and His Immaculate Mother how useful it would be if you were to agree to my proposals.

Firstly, it would be of great advantage to your Sisters to have devout missionaries living in community and able to direct them in those foreign lands, where religious are in great need of such assistance. If you have no one to direct them, they will grow lax and a great number will even be lost. It is not easy to find pastors who are able to give guidance to Sisters in those countries. Again, would it not be useful to have a novitiate house near ours so that your novices might from time to time be imbued with the spirit of our own missionaries? Secondly, it would be useful for you to have a house in the South and another in the North so as to facilitate the recruiting of vocations. I realize that there are great difficulties in having two novitiates, but it might be possible to surmount these difficulties. We should first examine the substance of a question before looking at the difficulties; we can then find a remedy for everything. I consider it very important that you should have one house near Paris, which will always be the centre of affairs. If you remain in the South, and have no representative in Paris,

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how will you be able to transact business with the ecclesiastical Superiors in those parts? The same applies to the matter of sending subjects and sending things to them.

Reflect on all this before God, and please write giving me full information regarding your work. I should prefer an interview with you to any number of letters as this matter is worth the trouble involved, since it is of great importance for God's glory. However, I cannot at present leave here to visit you.

I leave everything in the hands of Our Lord and may that pious project mature under the care of the most Holy Heart of Mary who started it.

Respectfully yours in the charity of Jesus and Mary,

Your most poor and
devoted servant,
FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

23

Letter Three La Neuville, December 28, 1842 Vol. 3, p. 358

Dear Mother Superior :

I am ashamed to have made you wait so long for a reply to your last letter. The delay was caused by the fact that I wanted to give information about the matter to the principal persons who want to enter your Society. I believe you are very wise in what you told me about the foundation of a house in Amiens and I think it would be well to adopt the plan you proposed. I shall assist you in any way I can in the matter. Please let me know when you propose to go to Paris so that I too may make arrangements to go there, if this is

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possible. If it is God's will I should like to have an interview with you so that we may reach complete understanding regarding the undertaking.

I cannot tell you exactly how many want to give their services to the holy work. Six presented themselves and there is now a seventh, but I am not sure that we can count on all of them. The two who seem most outstanding are faced with temporary difficulties and might not be able to go to Paris at the time of your visit, but the good Lord will arrange everything according to His good pleasure. I think they will seek to enter with you a little later. I believe that at least two will be able to go with you. Moreover, you know as well as I that we must never put our trust in men or their good will. We should give our attention to God alone Whose divine Providence will arrange everything according to His wishes. Let us always follow the good desires for His glory which He inspires, and then wait peacefully until He accomplishes His design.

I wish to ask your permission to gather information about the spirit of your Society and the state of things in your community. It is not that I have any doubts, but I wish to give assurance to the good ladies who want to consecrate themselves to that holy work. I shall ask a holy priest from your part of the country, who is known to me, for this information. You see that I am acting with the simplicity of the children of God and I ask you to act with the same confidence and simplicity.

I can assure you that in acting thus my only aim is to serve the greater glory of God and the progress of the holy work which He has inspired you to undertake. I want to have a share in it, not by mingling in it by active participation, nor as in a work that will belong to me. Most of all I want to remain outside everything that belongs to the administration of the work. I believe that God has entrusted it to you and

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that, therefore, it would be presumptuous of me to interfere. God has not called me for such a work.

All I want is to help you in every possible way and to have our missionaries help the good Sisters who are giving themselves to God with such great generosity. When I suggested a foundation in Amiens to you, it was not with a view to our taking a hand in its administration, but simply to help you in imparting the right spirit to that holy work. I also wished to help those good ladies whose generosity has so greatly impressed me. Furthermore I thought that it would be useful if your good Sisters received from the start direction similar to that which they would later receive from our missionaries, and that their spirit and ours ought to be almost the same. This I leave entirely in God's hands.

The one thing I should like before I send these ladies to your community, is the assurance that you will send them to the Negro missions. They desire this and it is for this reason that they are entering your Congregation. We shall discuss this matter when you come to Paris. I hope that God will make it possible for you to meet me there.

May I now make two observations with regard to your first letter and ask you to weigh them before God. After that, act according to God's wishes and not according to my poor human prudence.

I would suggest firstly that you should avoid being too specific and particular in the prescriptions of your Rule, but should, on the contrary leave room for changes. You have not yet enough experience especially with regard to the missions. Your Rule ought to be provisional for the next four or five years. After that it could be re-written with such additions, eliminations and changes as experience will suggest.

Secondly, I consider it necessary that the Sisters who go to foreign lands should be bound by vows. I shall explain this further if you wish.

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Accept, dear Reverend Mother, the expression of my sentiments of respect and charity, in which I am, in Jesus and Mary,

Your very poor and devoted
servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

24

Letter Four La Neuville, January 17, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 80

Dear Reverend Mother Superior:

This is just a hurried note. One of the young ladies who wish to work in the Negro missions came yesterday to visit us. She is a very fervent and capable person and belongs to a wealthy family of Brittany. Her parents have very little religion themselves and are opposed to her religious vocation. She has no hope of ever obtaining her parents' consent.

Divine Providence sent her on a journey to Paris on some family business and she availed herself of the opportunity to come here as she is eager to withdraw from the world. This seems to be the moment chosen by Divine Providence, so I decided to send her to you immediately after receiving your reply. It is urgent that she should go to you immediately, for if she returns to her parents she will not be able to leave home without causing unpleasantness.

This lady intends to write to her parents stating that she wishes to make a retreat of one month in a convent in order to examine what God wants of her. At the end of that period she will let them know where she is staying or else she will return home. I suggested that she act thus so that

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her parents cannot say that she acted with undue haste and without sufficiently considering her vocation.

She is twenty-six years of age, is serious-minded and shows maturity. I shall tell you more about her on another occasion. I merely state here that she is a good candidate whom Our Lord is sending to you for the holy work of the Negro missions.

I should like an immediate reply as I do not wish to send her to you without first obtaining your permission. On the other hand I do not want her to remain here very long lest her parents find out where she is. Some people from her part of the country know that one of our Fathers has contacts with some ladies who live there. Please mark the letter "Urgent", so that the postman may bring it here immediately as otherwise he might not deliver it for a few days after its arrival.

Please accept the expression of my sentiments of most sincere charity, with which I have the honor to be, in Jesus and Mary,

Your most devoted servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

P. S. There are also a few other ladies who have the same desire as this lady and who will be ready to follow her soon. I shall speak about them later. If you intend to come to Paris soon I hope you will be able to see at least two of them. If not we shall make other arrangements. Please let me know what your plans are.

Letter Five La Neuville, February 17, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 116

Reverend Mother Superior :

I rejoice before God that you are pleased with Miss des Loges. I never doubted but that you would be pleased. I am greatly consoled that our good Master is ever increasing your zeal for our poor Negroes. Here are a few details about Guinea.

Guinea is the native country of the Negro. The mode of life of the inhabitants is completely savage. Though the climate is very hot, Monsignor Barron, the Vicar Apostolic, told me that he suffered less from the heat there than in Rome, because in Guinea there is a fresh breeze from the sea. The climate is unhealthy as you will gather from the remainder of this letter. In the matter of material goods the inhabitants are the poorest and most destitute of men. They are farmers and live on rice and vegetables; they rarely go hunting.

Those who go there to work for the salvation of these poor souls will of necessity have to live in great poverty. I don't think I gave you these details in my last letter as I did not have time to write at length.

The people are good and docile and become attached to those who do good to them. Their religion is primitive but is well suited to prepare them for accepting the truths of Christianity. They acknowledge the existence of the Great Spirit who is said to be good and who never does harm to anyone. This will make it easy for them to accept the belief in the Incarnation and the Redemption. They also admit the existence of an evil spirit who is wicked and who is constantly persecuting them and doing them harm. They fear him and offer him sacrifices to placate his wrath. This

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is also an advantage as it may prepare them for belief in the Great Truths and the practice of the true religion.

You asked me what languages ought to be studied in order to deal with the Negroes. This is one of the major difficulties. The language, or rather languages, of Guinea are not very well known. There are numerous dialects and they differ considerably from one another. It would be well to know English and Spanish. English is the more important as with that to start with you will learn the language of the inhabitants during the first year that you are living among them. This first year is a year that is almost wasted, as far as missionary work is concerned, as one must spend it in becoming acclimatized. There are relations with the natives but only by means of interpreters. Those who know English or Spanish are easy to find. There are a grammar and dictionary of the language spoken in Cape Palmas and I shall ask the bishop to send me a few copies which I will forward to you. Negotiations regarding San Domingo are to be resumed and so it would be well if some of your Sisters learned Spanish in case you had to send a community there.

It would be very useful to teach writing and arithmetic to the natives and if your Sisters go to San Domingo they will have to do this. Even in Guinea arithmetic and writing are useful as you can teach them to write their own language in French characters. They have no writing of their own.

I do not have enough experience to give you any positive advice regarding manual labor. I think it is important to teach them to manage the home and how to do the ordinary things relative to their poor economic circumstances. As there is probably cotton in that country, it would be useful to teach them how to weave. Teach them also how to make bread, if the soil is suitable for the growing of wheat and barley. A knowledge of pharmacy is necessary in San Domingo and even more necessary in Guinea. We shall bring with us

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1,500 francs worth of medical supplies. Some knowledge of medicine is equally important. I believe that the predominant afflictions of these poor people are skin diseases. During my next journey I shall consult an expert physician and get detailed information on this matter, and will send it to you. I know that leprosy is very common in San Domingo.

As far as food and clothing are concerned it is necessary to bring everything with you, even the very house in which you will live. Buy the various wooden parts and then put them together later. Clothes should be made from light material. During the rainy season which lasts for at least three months, the nights are very cool, even cooler than in our own country, and are also very humid. So bring with you a cloak which you can use when there is need for it.

Remember that nothing can be obtained in the country itself, not even for money, which is unknown except to the Europeans on the coast. If you want a plate of beef soup it is necessary to buy an ox and slaughter it! There are, however, fowl and eggs.

You will usually pay for what you have to buy, with objects that have been brought from Europe,—knives, articles in “crisocal”, bells and other simple toys, tobacco and the like. Without money it is impossible to find anything to eat. Bring all the clothes you need. In Guinea, cloth can only be got in the shops of Europeans and at exorbitant prices.

I have a list of everything already purchased and still to be bought and if anything is wanting, experience will tell us within a year. For the first year our diet must be the same as people living in Europe, as it would not be advisable to change our food too quickly. A year should be enough to enable the missionaries to become acclimatized.

We will so arrange their departure that they will arrive in Guinea a little after the heavy rains. If they arrived before or during the rainy season they would be liable to become ill,

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but by arriving just after that they will be in no danger and will have time to get accustomed to the climate before the following rainy season. They will not leave, then, before the end of July.

There is no great hurry, therefore, for your visit to Paris. Should Bishop Barron return to France before that time, I shall let you know. If you come to Paris before that time, please let me know.

Miss des Loges should collect the small sum to which she is entitled.

Place your confidence in God and you will not be disappointed. I have written to Miss Lapique urging her to get ready to leave as soon as possible. I think she will bring a "dowry" with her, but I shall have more definite information about that in my next letter. I think we will have also two other young ladies about whom I have got very good reports. I shall try to have them make a retreat and this will enable me to judge them for myself. They are not bringing any money with them; one, I think, will be able to enter under the 8,000 francs of Miss des Loges; the other, I hope, will be sustained by the granaries of Divine Providence! Forgive my attempt at humor, for as the saying goes: "a hungry man does not enjoy a joke."

I see from your letter that, in general, you are not supposed to refuse postulants who do not bring a dowry, if they are persons who will be able to render great services. Nevertheless, we must practice a little moderation in this matter, and I, personally, intend to practice that moderation!

On the other hand, I believe that when such good vocations are offered us we should not demand a dowry from each one, for we might then risk leaving the qualities of the aspirants out of consideration. It will often happen that those who bring money are not suited for the work while others who bring nothing are well qualified. I shall do my best to

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add a little of my money next year to pay for part of that dowry. I cannot however guarantee that this will be possible.

I shall personally transmit your letter to the pastor of Our Lady of Victories.

I have the honor of being, in the most holy charity and union of Jesus and Mary,

Your most devoted servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

26

Letter Six La Neuville, March 15, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 137

J. M. J.

My dear Reverend Mother :

I failed to reply immediately, as I had to go on two journeys immediately after I received your letter. I hope the good Lord will take into consideration your faith and confidence and will bless your poverty. Though I knew your great trust in God and felt certain that He would sustain you, I should not, nevertheless, have dared to send those two ladies to you if I had not considered it necessary for reasons of prudence and for the good of the work.

The spiritual directors of these two ladies are very interested in the work for the Negroes and they will always be able to send you a certain number of candidates. They are zealous for your holy work and ours, which are, really, one and the same work, and this fact will, I hope, make us always united in the charity of our Master and for His divine service. I considered it my duty to accept them and send one of them on with Miss Lapique. You see, I had promised

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for a long time to accept them and they were already expected to come to Amiens to begin work. When they finally came, I feared that, if I refused to accept them, the fervor of those good directors might cool off and God's work might suffer. The candidate I have sent is very good, simple, mild, patient, very docile, modest and reserved. She is not as refined and cultural as Miss des Loges but is of solid virtue. Probably she will never be suited to become Superior of a community, but she will labor tirelessly and well, under a Superior's orders, for the salvation of souls. Her director assures me that never for any length did she lose the presence of God during the day. I do not know exactly what special talents she has. Her director says that she has good ability to learn, knows her catechism perfectly (I mean, that she can explain it to the poor). He thinks that she might have difficulty in learning English but that she would be good at instructing children. She writes poorly, knows sewing and ironing well, without being a "master" at these arts. To sum up, I don't think that she is very strong in intellectual accomplishments, but is very solid in her piety and very devoted. This, I believe, seems to suffice.

Miss Lapique will not be able to leave before the beginning of April; so you still have time to tell me what you think about that other candidate. I have explained the situation to the two priests and asked them not to send any more postulants who have not a dowry. I am of the opinion that, in future, you should not take on an excessive burden by accepting persons who are unable to pay. However, in this matter I shall act as you decide since this is not my work but yours. You will reply that it is not yours but Our Lord's work. You must admit, however, that it was to you that Our Lord entrusted it, and that I am only a poor man. I take the liberty to give you my opinion but you must follow God's will, and my opinion only in so far as you find God's will expressed in it.

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Miss Lapique is perfect in the art of ironing. She tells me that she could teach anyone to do it in six months. She can also make dresses and can do all kinds of work, and everything she does she does perfectly. She cannot make flowers but will learn how to do this before she leaves Paris. She is a very talented and accomplished person and clever at all work that is proper to her sex. She is firm and yet mild when she wants to be. She has a very keen mind and good judgment, is very good-humored and open, easy in her manner, simple and modest. In a word, I have met few people who possess so many brilliant qualities and in such a high degree. Added to this is her solid and true piety and great devotion to God and His glory.

This is a beautiful portrait and it makes me a little afraid. It is not easy for such a person not to be aware of her great qualities, and such natural gifts are ordinarily the occasion for temptations to pride, and might become a cause of trouble for that good soul. It is for this reason that I would like to tell you in advance how such a person should be dealt with.

I believe that you should be mild and moderate in your treatment of her. Use her talents—they can be useful to you—but without giving the impression that you consider them above the ordinary. Do not on the other hand act as if you were indifferent to her talents, but act as if you did not notice them, while at the same time making use of them. Treat her like anyone else with regard to the humiliations that are customary in your community and you will have no difficulty. I do not think that you should subject her to special humiliations as we read was done in the lives of some of the Saints. She has a very keen mind and would immediately see the reason for these special humiliations, and they would thus no longer do her any good. They might even amuse her and inspire thoughts of vanity.

To my mind, when you notice some temptation to self-love in her, you ought, in her better moments, try to make her see

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it for what it is and then urge her to embrace certain practices which will lead her to perfect humility.

I believe that what I have said will not cause you anxiety since you are accustomed to the direction of souls and the temptations of novices. What I wish to show you is that you should be forewarned in view of the interior state of this devout person who is truly good and fervent, and should take the necessary precautions from the beginning and thus help this dear soul to advance in perfection.

There is also a third person. Her parents are opposed to her going to the South and wish her to remain in some convent near Amiens for a time, and there put her vocation to the religious state to the test. I have placed her in a good convent for a period of from six to eight months. I shall introduce her to you when you come to Paris and then you will be able to judge her for yourself.

I apologize for meddling in your affairs to the extent of advising you regarding spiritual direction. I feel sure that in your charity you will not take offense but will prudently make use of the advice as God will suggest.

As nothing has been yet arranged for the departure of Bishop Barron, I do not think it is much use waiting until then; and I would like to see you soon in Paris. I shall take care of that affair when the time comes.

I believe that it would be well to wait a little longer before we draw detailed plans for the things which our good Sisters ought to learn. Time and experience will tell us more exactly what is required. I expect that in a year's time I shall know exactly what is required for Guinea and San Domingo, and I feel sure that divine goodness will open these two countries to us. I should prefer to have Guinea to San Domingo as the good to be done there would be incomparably greater, but, in all things we must find out what is God's good pleasure and allow ourselves to be guided like children by His Providence.

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English is not as difficult as you imagine, and it would not be necessary to have a perfect knowledge of the language. Spanish is easier and it might be useful in Guinea as well as in San Domingo. It is important, I think, not to make known our intentions with regard to certain countries until the time when we are ready to embark on the work.

The expenses of the passage, provisions, and even the clothes will not have to be borne by your house, but will be covered by the ecclesiastical authority that asks for your services. Therefore, you need not worry about this matter. We ourselves are obliged to collect the things we need but we would not have to bear this expense if we had not offered to do so in order to relieve Bishop Barron. He wanted to pay for our cassocks, books and linen, but I told him that we would see to these ourselves and that he could cover the rest of the expenses. It will cost me between a thousand and twelve hundred francs. There are always some incidental expenses but you can look after these to the best of your ability. Bishop Barron gave us a list of articles, to which we have added some others, and the sum of 8,000 francs, to cover their purchase. We will later receive a further sum to cover the remainder of our requirements.

Though it is not necessary to learn immediately all the things that will be useful in those countries, there are some that it would be well to prepare, as for instance pharmacy etc. I do not know if I mentioned in my last letter that one of our missionaries, who is very keen on your part of our holy enterprise, will arrive soon from San Domingo. He will, I am sure, make remote preparations for the coming of the Sisters, as soon as he arrives here. San Domingo will, perhaps, be easier than Guinea, but the harvest will be smaller. I should prefer Guinea, but we shall speak about that in its own time and place.

Since, as I told you, the ecclesiastical superiors will necessarily pay all the expenses for our dear Sisters, then it

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dawned on me that you will not be faced with the necessity of demanding a dowry from the Sisters who offer their services for the missions, since they would no longer be a financial burden to the community once they had left the novitiate. Please consider this before Our Lord.

Miss Lapique has a little more than 2000 francs. I owe her 1,500 francs borrowed from that sum but I shall pay it back to you this year. She needs linen and clothes. I shall try to economize and save a few hundred francs which will assist you in covering the boarding costs of the ladies I send you. I would already have sent you something but for the great expense I had.

Accept, my dear Reverend Sister, the expression of the most sincere charity, with which I am united to you in Jesus and Mary, in Whom I am,

Your most devoted servant,

Father Francis Libermann
Missionary of the Holy Heart
of Mary

27

Letter Seven La Neuville, March 26, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 159

Jesus, Mary, Joseph

Dear Reverend Sister :

Do not worry about the interior state of soul of our good Louise des Loges; it is a good state and there is no difficulty in seeing that it comes from God. I do not think that these violent emotions will do any great harm to her health. She may become weak for a time but I do not believe that there will be any bad aftermath. It is my belief that Our Lord

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makes use of those sensible graces in His desire to dispose her to serve Him faithfully later on. We must place our trust in Him. Nevertheless, we should not neglect the precautions necessary for safeguarding her health. Should you notice that her condition is getting worse and that her health is too greatly affected by those strong emotions, you must not hesitate to distract her a little. You could shorten her meditations under various pretexts, as, for example, by giving her such functions as would necessitate the curtailment of the time of mental prayer, or in some other way. You might also seek to divert her during recreation. I am well aware that you will not be completely successful in helping her to get rid of those interior impressions, but you can, at least, reduce the evil effects they might have on her health. It would be well, however, to avoid diverting her in such a way as to distract her completely and cause her to abandon her state of sensible love, as this might eventually cause her to worry and might lead to scruples. Moreover, we must not run counter to the Holy Spirit of God Who is at work in her. Aim merely at helping the body without doing harm to the soul. It is right that she should fear illusions. Nevertheless, you must not try to encourage that fear lest you cause her trouble and anxiety of mind.

You ought to appear to reassure her, and must never say anything that might cause her to think that her fears are well founded. When I say "appear", I mean that you should not insist on it very much, but just enough to let her know that you have no anxiety about the matter. Do not try to reassure her too much, as it is very useful for her to retain some suffering in that matter, as this will help her to control the faculty of the imagination which gets mixed up in such things. This pain which she suffers will save her from yielding too trustfully to that sensible impulse. Such a thing would be dangerous for her.

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I think that, in relations with her, you should not seem to regard her state as extraordinary; and, after all, up to the present it is not very extraordinary. Don't worry about the weaknesses she has suffered. The violent emotions she undergoes will give you an occasion for offering her reproaches: sometimes she listens too much to herself; at other times she is too fond of sensible graces; or again, she yields interiorly to vain complacency and this makes her imagine she is somebody important, since God is so evidently good to her; or, she will imagine that she is not sufficiently generous, and so on But, in order that she may think that you are convinced that she is at fault, or that you know some fault or defect in advance, even though this is not the case, you must always have an apparently good reason for making the reproaches.

You should take these precautions with souls in general, as otherwise they might suspect that you were reproaching them simply to try them and this would have no effect, or might even have the effect of making them think that you esteemed them more than the rest.

On the other hand, be gentle with her and make her tell you all that is taking place in her soul so that the enemy may not take that good soul by surprise. Always keep her humble and perfectly obedient.

The family of Miss Lapique met with some misfortune and this necessitates that she remain until at least the Tuesday after Easter.

I am sending you good Pauline Bernard alone. She seems to be good, very good, in fact, and capable of good service some day for Our Lord and for the poor neglected souls whom He will entrust to us.

The Bishop gave me news recently about Guinea. He left an Irish priest in his Vicariate and the latter has informed

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him that the king and the prominent people of that place are very favorable to the Catholics. Some Protestants tried to spread calumnies against us but the king examined the facts and found that they were calumniators. The same priest also told the Bishop that he has not yet been able to persuade even one chief to give up the many wives he has and to live with one wife. The Bishop adds that these countries need Sisters who will easily be able to inspire a horror for bigamy in the native girls and this would be an excellent antidote to the evil.

I have a feeling that he reported this because he wishes to have a small community of Sisters without delay, but I am not certain about this. If you think you have three or four Sisters among the older ones whom you could send next August, please let me know, and I shall tell the Bishop. If you have such a group, we would provide everything they might need and also arrange for their support in the countries to which they might be sent. This would not be easy, but since the Irish priest now in Guinea has expressed the desire to have Sisters, Bishop Barron could send him money and give him charge of arranging everything. I believe that this plan should be kept secret from your Sisters until we receive the reply of the Bishop, since I am not certain that that was his intention. Please reply to me as soon as possible, so that I may write to him. I should like to write to him soon as my reply is already overdue.

I shall write sometime soon to the priests who sent me those two postulants from the North. It is possible that they might find others who would be suitable. I shall let them know what are your intentions in the matter.

I am very pleased that Our Lord has made you approve my suggestion with regard to the dowry, as this will make it easier to accept postulants.

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Respectfully yours in the charity with which I am, in Jesus and Mary,

Your most devoted servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Missionary of the Holy Heart
of Mary

28

Letter Eight La Neuville, May 5, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 225

J. M. J.

Dear Reverend Sister :

I had a letter today from Miss Lapique in which she says that she is ready to leave and will go to your convent on next Monday (May 8). I have only a little time to reply to your last letter as I will send this reply by Miss Lapique. I am very glad that she has at last decided to enter, as I always feared that a serious obstacle might hinder her.

So the good Lord continues to bestow his favors on our good Louise! I don't know what can be done to give her consolation but you must place your trust in our good Master. If it is His wish to use that good soul for His glory in the service of others, He will know how to sustain her amidst the violent shocks to which He exposes her. I know well that this violent state of soul which God sends her weakens her body, but I am confident that there will be no lasting ill effects. It is possible that these experiences will injure her health, but I believe that despite this the good Lord will make use of her for His work. After all, even if she should become

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incapacitated, is not Jesus master of His possession? Will He not use it to fulfil His wishes? If He desires to act in that soul in a way that destroys her body, what right have we to object?

My dear Sister, you are acting most correctly in submitting to the good pleasure of the divine Master. It is my opinion that the condition of Louise will not last very long. Even if it were to last a year or more, this would not entirely stifle our hopes regarding that good person. On the contrary, her experiences will help her to become firmly established in perfection and will enable her to labor for the glory of the Master with the natural resources still left to her.

The way you treat her seems very wise to me. Do not be afraid to distract her from her absorption in God. You will not be successful but you might be able to lessen somewhat the bad effects which her state of soul has on her health. I should not like that you should be successful in distracting her from God, as there would be no advantage in that. You should avoid the things that naturally lead to dissipation, for they sometimes produce violent reactions, and the result might be the very opposite of what you wish to attain.

What she needs is a mild and peaceful distraction but at the same time one that is sufficiently strong. It would be a good thing if the members of the community did not know of her condition, but since they have begun to notice it, you should treat it like an ordinary physical weakness and avoid giving the impression that you know anything about the sensible graces that are the cause of that weakness. Avoid showing esteem for the state of Louise, but while treating her with ordinary gentleness, act towards her the same as you would to the other Sisters. I would advise that, in your ordinary conversations with her, you should avoid giving her the impression that you consider her graces extraordinary. Dismiss her ideas about ecstasy and rapture, and be satisfied

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with pointing out to her that Our Lord favors her with very strong sensible graces as is His wont with beginners; that, however, because she is organically weak and has weak nerves, such experiences cause violent reactions in her body and thus cause her discomfort. Tell her that there is nothing she can do about this but practice patience until the time when those graces will be less sensible and more solid.

In speaking thus you will be telling the exact truth. Ecstasy is in fact an infirmity which comes from the weakness of our organs; but the thing that causes ecstasy is a great favor of God, a great grace of divine love which usually produces great things in souls. It is the grace of beginners and does not usually last very long. It can last for two or three years but this is exceptional. There have been extraordinary cases where such phenomena lasted for a much longer time. When those physical reactions gradually diminish or disappear they are sometimes replaced by interior pains. At other times, other graces of a similar kind, but more intimate and of a higher order, take their place. Again, it happens that souls leave that state and enter gradually into a state that is more solid, stable and of a higher order. If we are permitted to desire anything, it seems to me that this latter state is the most desirable of all.

When you come to Paris, you might do well to stay in Rue Notre-Dame-des-Victoires. I usually stay there at the Hotel de Strasbourg. Close by is the Hotel d'Espagne. This would make it easy for us to meet and to have a much-needed discussion of the matters that concern the good of our poor Negroes. It would also bring you near the church of Our Lady of Victories. However, if your business demands that you stay elsewhere, do not put yourself to any inconvenience in trying to follow my suggestion.

The good Pauline needs to be instructed. I hope you will be able to impart to her the knowledge she needs to do the

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work the good Lord has in store for her. Once she acquires that knowledge, I think she will be very useful for God's work and will make a very good religious. I am convinced that in the beginnings of religious societies, there is a greater need for good example than for talent. The good Lord is at the helm. It is enough to have a few good heads at the principal posts. Further, the knowledge required from those who have to instruct our poor Negroes need not be extensive. Our Lord will provide.

Little Adele who is still here is more open. She is alert and yet quite modest, and is always gay. She seems to be of excellent character and well disposed to piety. I shall do my best to enable you to bring her back with you when you come to Paris.

Your most devoted and poor servant, in the charity of Jesus and Mary.

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Missionary of the Holy Heart
of Mary

29

Letter Nine La Neuville, August 8, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 286

J. M. J.

Dear Reverend Sister :

I received your letter eight days ago and felt very badly about having made you wait for a reply but the good Lord prevented me from answering.

Let us always place our hopes in Jesus Christ and in our holy Mother ! We shall then be well off because we will have

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uppermost in our minds that it is not our work we are doing, that we are but poor, useless instruments in the hands of our Master who uses us to accomplish His will. When we meet with success let us not rejoice because we are successful or because our honor is saved but because our divine Master is fulfilling His will and because souls will be saved. In times of distress, let us remain in our nothingness; and if we are not able to do good, we are at least reaping confusion and shame for ourselves. When we suffer such humiliations we should remain humbly prostrate before God. When men show approval let us consider them as sent by God to encourage our weakness. Let us bless the good Master for it, without attending to these men and their words (I mean, without reflecting with complacency on their remarks). When they criticize, scold and show disapproval of us, let us look upon them as God's emissaries sent to confound us and to make us realize our poverty and nothingness. We should then encourage our feelings of weakness and wretchedness in God's presence, put ourselves under His divine authority and live always in that subjection, while at the same time refusing to occupy ourselves with the men who ill-treat us or to pay attention to their words.

I am not surprised that the Bishop has become more favorably disposed towards you. Since God has given him charge of the guidance and conduct of your Society, He will give him the necessary light to direct it according to the divine plan. If the Bishop sometimes opposes your views, it is because of a secret order of divine mercy, which is directed to cleansing and purifying your soul more and more and making you more reserved and more humble and submissive to the grace of Jesus Christ, and thus enabling you to be faithful to His divine guidance. Rejoice then, my dear Reverend Mother, and accept gladly anything that befalls you. As long as your soul, in all humility and mildness, is

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submissive to God, all things will serve to glorify the heavenly Father and foster the work intended by God, and will at the same time sanctify your own soul.

I find it hard to make positive pronouncements regarding the peculiarities of our good Louise which you have described to me. Her state of ecstasy does not worry me, since everything points to the fact that her mind is alright. It is true that that state weakens her, but Our Lord can do what He pleases with the souls that belong to Him. If He wishes to use that good soul for His glory, He will know how to preserve her life in this world. If He wants to purify her in a short time and then take her away, He is the Lord! Besides I know that you yourself are not worried about that.

You say that "when she was in those states, she represented certain sensible objects in her mind." In what states? Was it when she had an "absence of sense activity", or was it during those "states of absorption in God?" Are those representations continual or intermittent? Do they last a long time? How long? What effect do these representations produce on her soul while they are present? Do they cause that "absorption", or do they, on the contrary, arise when she already is absorbed? What is the principal object of her devotion? What are those things she sees in Our Lord and which arouse in her those outbursts of love and cause her to become absorbed in Him? Is this His Sacred Passion or some other mystery that she represents to herself or experiences? How long has she been influenced by a great devotion for the mystery which makes such a lively impression on her? Is it her mind or her heart that is affected by the impression that is produced by those representations? I mean, is the thing that impresses her due to the fact that she considers that devotion to be beautiful, important, etc., or is she first strongly seized with a lively emotion of the heart which inflames and absorbs her mind either bit by bit

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or suddenly? What are the progressive stages in those visions, or the objects of those visions? Did she first feel affectively drawn to the Five Wounds of Our Divine Savior, or was it her mind that inclined her to them, or did the vision come to her suddenly without previous impressions? What effect did her first vision produce on her? Does she attach much importance to those things? Does she seem displeased when others give no credence to the words she claims to have heard? Does she obey you reluctantly and does she dislike dismissing those thoughts from her mind when you order her to do so? You told me that "she represents certain objects to herself" etc. . . ., I think that you are describing this exactly. Is that "representation" of objects done by sight or the imagination or is it in the mind; or is it presented as something real? I mean by the latter, is she undergoing those representations in a passive manner? Is she active throughout or partially active; or is she purely passive? When these representations are not present does she arouse them actively? When they tend to diminish or disappear, does she seek to prolong them? How do these visions come to an end? Is it suddenly or do they diminish gradually? In both cases, what is taking place in her soul while she is experiencing these things? What state is she in and what impression remains in her immediately after they disappear? If these representations disappear gradually, in what way does this come about? When they are present, is her soul completely passive so that she no longer has any active movements, or does she still act so that, besides receiving the impressions, she still retains the power to produce and actually does produce movements by her own action with the assistance of grace?

If she has no active movements, has she passive movements, that is, is her soul put in motion towards those various

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objects by a passive impression, or is there no sensible action at all? If she is active, do her movements whether passive or active, take place in her mind, her imagination or her heart? If in the mind or the heart, are they violent, lively, passionate, or, mild, peaceful, languid and like those of a soul that is at rest with God? Or are they movements of pure faith and are they solely in the intellectual part?

I am ashamed of bothering you with all these questions, for no doubt, most of them are useless; but it would be difficult for me to make a judgment on all that is taking place in that good soul, if I had no more information than what you sent me. I realize that one who is versed in such matters would not have to ask so many questions, but I think that I have already told you that since I have read hardly any spiritual authors, I am not at all instructed in those matters through my reading. That is why I ask you not to object to my asking so many questions.

We are dealing with an important matter and I believe that those questions will help us to see things clearly. However, I would say this, that it is possible that if you proposed so many questions to the good Louise herself, this might cause her to become fixed in her state and this would be harmful. I leave this to your own prudence. I firmly approve your manner of acting towards that good soul.

You might even sometimes choose to listen a little to her without paying any special attention to what she is saying, but this ought to be done without affectation. In general, you should not show that you attach great importance to what is taking place in her. Listen to her as if to something useful that might help the good of her soul, and because you do not want her to become a prey to illusions. Then you must still examine each thing she tells you. Even by taking such safeguards regarding the reality of some of her visions, you still cannot be certain that all are real. Even allowing

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that they are all good, I would advise you not to adopt all those devotions, though they happen to be holy and approved by the Church. It is in accordance with God's will that we should test those things before we help to disseminate them.

Rose is a good girl and she is frank and open. Still she will not always tell you all that is taking place in her soul. She needs to be studied specially so that we may know her interior life properly. Tell good Sister Rose that I am not forgetting her before Our Lord.

Tell Miss Morillon that I am praying for her as she asked. She will become a good and holy religious if she learns to keep silence well. She will have to practice silence for a long time if she wants to speak, later on, the language of Jesus. If we want to speak the language of grace well, we must forget the language of our fallen nature. We forget the latter only by perfect silence. If she wants to become a holy religious, she will also have to observe the rule perfectly in its smallest details. All, however insignificant their piety or religious spirit, observe the *important* and *essential* rules. Holy religious and those who aspire earnestly to become such, observe the *smallest* rules and this *because* of their great love for God. For when it is a question of pleasing God everything becomes great and important. She must also become perfectly obedient, obeying immediately all the known intentions of her Superior, with cheerfulness and humility and without making objections. When observations are made to her she should accept them and love sincerely those who make these observations. She should be entirely open with her Superiors, telling them simply all that is taking place in her soul, the pains as well as the pleasures, the temptations as well as the graces, and she must follow the advice given her.

She should never yield to discouragement for any reason whatever, but should inform her Superior immediately **when**

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sadness or discouragement enter her soul. She must never become annoyed with herself or worried at the sight of her imperfections. She should never compare herself with anyone unless it be to humble herself and be edified by the perfections she sees in her Sisters. She ought never to judge anyone and, should such thoughts enter her mind, she should humble herself before Our Lord Who said: "Judge not and you shall not be judged." She should consider it particularly serious to judge and scrutinize her Superiors. If the devil has tempted her seriously in this matter, she should never make known her judgment to anyone, nor indulge in grumbling. If she does make it known it ought to be to her Superior and by way of self-accusation. Let her be full of confidence since it is Mary who brought her where she is and it is Mary who will make her advance in perfection.

May I ask you, Reverend Mother Superior, to tell Miss Morillon that I have returned the two hundred francs to Father Schwindenhammer. It would be well if she fixed up things with regard to her deposit in the savings bank. Little Adele is anxious to leave. She is well and will probably enter towards the middle of September. She will have to go alone as the other little one, about whom I spoke to you, did not come.

Father Tisserant wrote to me from the Island of Saint Lucia (an English colony in the West Indies) that he had found a mulatto lady between twenty-six and thirty years of age, who is full of piety and zeal, and takes delight in serving poor Negro women and the sick. "She belongs to a respectable family" to use Fr. Tisserant's words. He has had her under observation for several months and considers that she would be suitable for your holy work. He asks if he could send her to you and if he could use some of the money which is to the credit of Miss Lapique to pay for her passage. There are thus two questions: first, would it be wise to accept her?

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secondly, should her voyage be paid for with the money of Miss Rose?

To the first question I would answer yes, provided her good dispositions are certain. I should say no to the second question. First of all it would be necessary to obtain Miss Lapique's consent, and she ought not to give that consent. It would also require your consent and I believe that you likewise ought to refuse, as I do not think we should pay postulants. It is already a sufficient burden for you to accept them when they bring nothing with them. You are not in a position at present to undertake such expenses. If God wants vocations He will send her to you ; if not, you need not go and bring her over.

You are well justified in having confidence in God, since Our Lord's goodness and Mary's protection have been sufficiently in evidence to confirm you in that confidence. As a safeguard against presumption, distrust self and be convinced of your poverty and helplessness. Remain thus in peace and humility before God and refuse to be carried away by an excited imagination or pride. When we have such an interior spirit of humility and peace, we can boldly place our trust in God alone and we have nothing to fear.

One all-embracing rule regarding the subject of superiority is that we did not come to be served but to serve. You are the first servant of your community. The difference between your service and that of domestic servants is that you must sacrifice yourself for your mistresses. An ordinary domestic servant owes only his labor to his mistress. Our Master has said: "I did not come to be ministered unto but to minister and to lay down my life." These words sum up all the duties of Superiors, for they were addressed to them. Mildness and humility should therefore be the characteristics of your rule. You must not ask your subjects to execute *YOUR* orders, but the orders of the Master, because both

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you and they are His servants. You are a domestic servant in the house of Jesus Christ, and are charged with seeing that the children carry out His will. A domestic servant is the servant of both children and master, and she must give very careful attention to his beloved children and respect them in her heart. She must herself fulfill, and make others fulfill the will of the Master, but she must not assume the airs of the mistress. If you do this Our Lord will tell you: "You know not of what spirit you are; yours should be the spirit of a servant towards souls, and you assume the spirit of a master."

You might object, "Must I not see to it that my authority is respected?" I reply: "YOUR authority must not be respected, but the authority of Our Lord who is in you and Whom you represent in regard to your Sisters, while you yourself remain a very poor servant. You do not deserve respect; Jesus alone deserves it and it is He alone whom your religious must respect in you."

Now note that if you strive to make them respect the authority which Jesus has given you, that self-love which is inborn in us as a consequence of sin, will constantly tend to demand respect for your own person, and insensibly the respect that is due to the sovereign Master of heaven and earth will be directed to a poor and useless creature. Forgive me for using such terms, but it is true that we are all wretched creatures and do not deserve the attention of others, much less their respect.

But, you will say to me, how can I govern a community, if my authority is not respected? I do not say that your authority should not be respected. Your Sisters must have the greatest respect for you, but not for yourself who are *nothing*, but for Jesus Christ, their Master, Whose representative for them you are. If one or other Sister sometimes is wanting in that respect, you must regret it and pray much, because she has failed in respect for Jesus Christ, but you must not

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consider it your duty to avenge your authority, much less to be angry with or entertain aversion for such a Sister. On the contrary, try to develop a great and sincere affection and compassion for her and lead her to accept her obligation of respect. In trying to achieve this you should be entirely occupied with the interior state of that Sister, and do not reflect on the injury You have received yourself. When you entertain such ideas you will run the risk of having thoughts of self-love instead of the thought of compassion which is a holy thought. If you think of the insult you will be prone to choose wrong means, but when it is compassion that moves you, you will choose the means that are appropriate. The use of sweetness and mildness is most in harmony with the spirit of our good Master.

Now, how ought you to act in order that the authority of Jesus residing in you may not be despised? This is done by not striving to make others respect You, and by avoiding airs of superiority. It is by adopting such airs that earthly kings lord it over their subjects, and even so the subjects are expected to consider them as benefactors; but we must not act in this way. Our Lord is our Model. Our government must be a holy servitude consecrated to Jesus Christ and to the souls He entrusts to us. He has given us His command: "Let him who is the first among you become as the servant of all."

But how can we act as servants and at the same time ensure that the authority of Jesus Christ will be respected? By acting as He acted. Be modest, serious, peaceful, consistent and humble; renounce yourself in all things and never seem to seek yourself in anything; rely on God alone. If you act thus you will not have to seek the esteem of your Sisters, nor should you even think about this. Do not seek to be loved by them, but love them all with equal tenderness. Treat them with mildness and sweet firmness, without rigor or harsh-

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ness. If you do that, you will be loved and esteemed, but if on the contrary you look for love and esteem, you will be the slave of men and will no longer rely on God alone.

You may say that I thus run counter to all the ordinary principles laid down for Superiors. I do not think so, but I want them to reach the same results without being preoccupied with these principles. The words of Our Lord which I have quoted are formal and explicit. If we do not adopt the spirit of Jesus, we cannot claim that we are His own; and if we govern in a manner that differs from His, we do not possess His spirit. If our conduct is truly holy and modelled on His, we need not occupy our mind with our personal authority. This is difficult, for superiority demands supreme evangelical perfection.

In your conduct with your Sisters, when occasion demands that you give orders, grant or refuse permissions, or in general exercise any function of authority, act with mildness, modesty and recollection, and speak little. With subordinates let that little you say express mildly and humbly what you have in mind; rarely explain your reasons for giving such an order, etc. If you have done something wrong or imprudent, or if in some circumstance your advice was unwise, do not try to excuse yourself, but allow each Sister to think what comes to her mind, and humble yourself at the feet of Our Lord.

Always remember that gentleness and persuasion penetrate into souls, while firmness and rigor only cause an external change. Therefore, with regard to the external order in the house, be firm and yet mild and gentle. With regard to the direction of the interior life of souls, be mild and gentle. If you want to lead souls, you must learn how to bend and be adaptable. You should follow them in their various states, considerate at all times, adapting yourself to each in order to support and encourage them according to their various

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dispositions and states of soul. This is what St. Paul means by becoming all things to all men.

Note well that severity and direct opposition to the evil dispositions of souls serves merely to break them; it almost never leads to a cure. Tolerate the evil for a long time, and if, sometimes, you think you ought not to suffer it any longer, suffer it still, and you will see in the end that you did the right thing; whereas you will hardly ever see happy results from severity and direct opposition.

Remember what I told you in Paris: the majority of souls are lost through discouragement. This is the universal evil especially among the devout. Sustain and encourage, and you will see that Our Lord will come to your assistance. We often reprove and scold and pursue a soul that is doing wrong under the pretext of preventing an offence against God, and often this is not true, for we are acting in impatience. We are too weak and too imperfect to support the weaknesses and imperfections of others, and we convince ourselves that we are acting through zeal; but, however hard we try, we find it difficult to so convince ourselves.

Be also on your guard, my dear Reverend Mother, against one fault which is rather common among women Superiors: it is a certain lack of sympathy with persons whose character they dislike, and a particular repugnance for certain faults and ways of behavior. These Superiors are inclined to judge such persons unfavorably and to treat them harshly for such faults; they show coldness, indifference, testiness, severity, etc., towards them.

Try also to avoid having a special affection for one or other Sister. There should be no preferences and, still less, any manifestation of such preferences. When you examine and judge your Sisters—a thing that is necessary since you must reach a proper estimate of them—do not allow any bitterness to enter your mind, but let charity fill your heart and let

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charity be the soul of your examination so that, in spite of the evil you discover, you may not be moved by irritation, interior severity, or lack of appreciation. Let two elements dominate such judgments: First, your mind should be free from prejudice and evil suspicion, and should look peacefully at the workings of the soul you are seeking to know. Examine the soul calmly in the presence of God, not assuming any superiority to your Sister, but acknowledging your poverty before God. When you see some evil, you should will charity and sympathy for the soul; humble yourself and feel sorry with all meekness and trust in God.

Secondly, being likewise at peace in God's presence, consider the means necessary for the cure of that soul which is afflicted by evil, the means suitable to her particular state, and adopt these means calmly and confidently, using them always with charity and following the guidance of the Spirit of God Who enlightens our minds.

In connection with being abandoned to God's will, it seems certain that you should not take into consideration the question of money when deciding about postulants. Your work is God's work and He will not forsake you. We should not take on any work if we are not able to place our trust in God. I need not develop this point because I am certain that you accept it.

I find it difficult to give you positive advice regarding the other point you mentioned, since it does not concern your work essentially, but is an undertaking that is merely connected with it. Here we are no longer dealing with fundamentals, and you would need to look for a manifestation of God's will before you plan to leave the ordinary course of things. Regarding your essential work it is God's design that you ought to place all your confidence in Him alone; this is of the very nature of the work. If you all feel an intimate attraction for abandoning yourselves to God's guidance, you

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need not fear that you will commit a fault of presumption. If doubts, worries, and embarrassments of various kinds arise, I would advise you not to rely on that idea of abandonment, but to wait until God's will is more clearly manifested.

Bishop Barron will be here one of these days. Please reply immediately regarding the mulatto woman, and pray for us.

Your most humble servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Missionary of the Holy Heart
of Mary

30

Letter Ten La Neuville, August 25, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 323

J. M. J.

Dear Reverend Mother :

Little Adèle is bringing my reply to your last letter. The Sisters of the community in which she stayed praise her very highly. Her conduct was always most edifying and above reproach. She has shown great courage in trying to follow her vocation. I believe that she will make a good member of your society. I take the liberty of asking on her behalf that the six months which she spent in that devout community should count as part of her postulancy. The courage and constancy with which she bore the opposition of her family and persevered in her vocation, despite her attachment to them, should be considered as a period of trial. If you add to that another six months during which you yourself can test her, you will be able to judge whether she is suitable for your community. I presume to propose this to you be-

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cause I believe that you promised that the time she would have to wait would be counted as part of her postulancy. However, I am not certain about this promise. I make this suggestion to you in all simplicity and leave it to you to judge whether it is proper or not. It is not my place to meddle in any way in the affairs of your community.

Adèle will, I think, bring along the sum of two hundred francs, some of which she will have to use to pay for her journey, but a small sum will be left for other expenses. She has linen but no bed sheets. Had I not been obliged to provide for six missionaries who are ready to leave, I would have provided her with a few pairs. Please keep the two hundred francs which Miss Morillon owes me, not as partial payment for the 1,500 francs owed to Rose Lapique, but to help you in covering the expenses of little Adèle.

Do not become discouraged at the want of material resources. Place your confidence in God. Do not spend more than is necessary, but at the same time abandon yourself to the good Master regarding the things you need. I believe that we ought not to refuse good candidates because of lack of money and I know that you share this opinion. If you notice that you have not enough resources, reduce the number of the poor children in your care rather than the number of your postulants. I believe that God will not be found wanting to you, He who provides even for the needs of the wicked. Work for His glory and He will work for you. You will have moments of trial, sadness and discouragement from time to time, but bear all these things with humility, love, confidence in God and submission to His will. Let your soul be at peace and silent before our Lord Jesus, and allow Him to do with you whatever He pleases.

You will, at times, also have to bear the heavy burden of dealing with imperfect souls and you will have your worries

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about the future. But all this is as nothing for a soul that lives for God and in God. Such a soul prostrates herself before her Master, at peace in His presence, and with humility, meekness, and love. She walks in all simplicity, accepting things as they are, doing her best to bear everything, to be patient with herself, and all this with a view to procuring the glory of Him Who is the sole end and goal of her life. Remember, my dear Reverend Sister, that you are living for Jesus Christ. The life He lends you must be spent for His glory; nor ought you to seek satisfaction and happiness; think rather of suffering for His glory. If you are enjoying your life then you are not sacrificing your life for Jesus; but if you seek to live in Jesus and die to self, you will find it easy to accept, to receive, and to bear the enormous burden of caring for souls and administering a work of God.

Practice resignation, my dear Reverend Mother, and carry the burden which the divine Master lays upon you with peace, love and abandonment. Do not be frightened at the faults you see in souls; suffer them as Jesus suffers them, lead them as He leads them, console them as He consoles them with sweetness and peace. Where possible avoid annoying souls. Trials are for perfect souls; the imperfect we should direct as best we can and we should use gentleness to obtain from them what they are able to give.

Forgive me for writing in this perfunctory and sententious manner. I am hurrying because of the departure of our missionaries. You know that I do not presume to direct you but simply to convey to you what is in my mind, and so I continue in the same vein. Avoid most carefully in your community any disagreements that arise because members come from different parts of the country. This postulant is the fifth that has come to you from the North. These five must not form a community within a community but there must be a fusion born of the charity and kindness of the older members

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who come from the South and who form the major part of your community.

Do not worry because Rose wants to go to the missions before the older members. It would be well if you did not speak of it to her, but turned her attention away from the subject and let her believe that she will certainly go there. When the time comes she will listen to reason. She will not, I think, be hard to manage, provided she is allowed to work for the good of the missions.

Avoid worrying too much about Louise. Do not conclude that she is the victim of her imagination because she has sometimes been misled by it. I am convinced that even in the case of the greatest saints who have had extraordinary supernatural experiences, there have been visions in which their imagination had some share, and some visions were purely creations of the imagination. It would be very strange if the weakness and wretchedness of human nature born in sin did not manifest themselves even in the midst of the greatest graces, especially when supernatural experiences affect the constitution of a person. I am not in a position, from the little you told me about her, to make an absolute pronouncement about the state of Louise, but I am becoming convinced that the supernatural has a share in her condition. The very fact that I have asked you so many questions shows you that I need further details. You say that if those ecstasies were to cease entirely, this would be proof that they were the product of her imagination and the result of organic weakness. I do not agree with you in this. They could become rare and finally stop entirely and yet they might not have been produced by the imagination, at least not all of them, nor even the greater part of them. Such matters admit of variation. Some may have come from her imagination, especially towards the end.

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What I suggest is that you examine the effects that have remained in her soul. I would judge the tree by its fruits, and in this way we shall not go wrong. Do not easily convince yourself that a good and humble person like Louise becomes the prey of such grave illusions, and that these afterwards produce good results for her sanctification. Again take care not to plunge her into anxiety and discouragement. Even if all the things that pertain to her state had their origin in illusion—which is not the case—you should make use of them to benefit her progress. If she becomes distressed and discouraged, you will find it very difficult to rouse her from that state. Act then, test her, try her, but only in proportion to the strength you know her to possess.

May the light of Our Lord be with you. I will pray for this with all my heart.

(signature missing)

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Letter Eleven La Neuville, September 16, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 337

J. M. J.

Dear Reverend Mother,

I see that you are firmly nailed to the cross and that your heart is pierced by a thousand swords of sorrow. It is possible that you will have to bear these things for a long time. You are no doubt sorrowful unto death but try to realize that giving birth to children and educating them is accompanied by much pain. When we first take on the work of God, we do not reflect on all the bitterness that will fill our hearts before that work is completed. We might consider those things in theory but we have no practical experience

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of this pain. If we had, we would not have the courage to undertake the works. Nevertheless, with God's help, you will persevere in your good desires and make use of the cross to advance God's work through the sanctification of your soul. Be strong in faith and put your trust in God and He will supply everything necessary. The enemy will not be able to destroy what God's eternal decree has decided to accomplish.

The letters of those poor girls cause me great grief and embarrassment. I considered and reconsidered the sad affair, but it was all in vain. I did not know what to answer to those poor afflicted souls to make them recover peace of mind. I choose the middle path of not declaring myself for or against their claims, lest a formal pronouncement on my part might aggravate Rose's temptation and sadden them all. I considered that I might be able to allay their emotion if I temporized and especially if I told them that I intended to go to Castres.

This will set their minds at rest a little. Further, since they have not given me a full account of the case, I cannot get a clear idea of their state of mind, nor can I know what would satisfy or console them. They say vaguely that they believe and fear that they are not where God wants them to be, yet they do not say explicitly what is the cause of their trouble.

Little Rose is the one who suffers most severely. I hope it will do her good. It is in accord with God's providential designs and will serve to sanctify that good soul. But her needs are great; God grant that her mental afflictions will help her to improve to a certain extent. She should be handled with great consideration so that she will stand up well under this trial.

I believe that I told her that the novitiate lasted three years normally. I even seem to remember that because of that she

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expressed the desire to have it shortened, and that I told her that perhaps (word missing) something, but that it was not certain.

Poor Louise also has her troubles! Be full of charity towards her, my dear Mother! Be mild, patient, and sustain those poor afflicted souls. Watch over Louise lest she commit a fault and suffer harm from all these troubles, and lest the enemy prevail in her soul at the expense of Our Lord. I still contend that her favors, past and present, are from heaven. The imperfections and faults that still remain can co-exist with these graces.

I don't think that it would be wise for Rose to talk things over with Louise or the other Sisters, as this would merely tend to increase their trouble and agitation. Hence you will notice in my reply to Rose, that I recommend her not to speak about these matters to Louise.

If you have the opportunity, why not begin to study English? We should always prepare things a long time in advance. If we wait until everything is ready it will be too late. The most important thing to do is to converse with people who know the language. It is an easy language to read but difficult to speak.

We have just sent off seven missionary priests and three brothers. They will be divided into two communities, one of which will go to Senegal and will land at the island of Goree which is near that country. The other group will go to Guinea and will probably settle down at Garroway, near the Cape of the Palms. The Bishop intends to set up residence in Senegambia. Our missionaries are on their way; please pray for a happy voyage and God's blessing on their future missionary work.

Please excuse this hurried letter; I am overburdened with work that clamors for attention. Let us pray for our poor

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girls that God may give them peace and help them to profit from their present state.

I have the honor of being in Jesus and Mary,

Your most devoted servant,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN

32

Letter Twelve

September 28, 1843

Vol. 4, p. 358

J. M. J.

Dear Reverend Mother:

You see now what it means to undertake a great work for the glory of Jesus Christ! It is necessary for us to pass through great tribulations. Consider yourself fortunate that you thus resemble the One for whom you labor. He began with sorrow and ended with ineffable joy; He began with ignominy and anguish and ended with glory. Submit calmly to the divine will which places that burden upon your shoulders. We are not on earth for enjoyment but to suffer, and it does not matter that we poor "nothings" suffer anguish, humiliation and extreme pain. Jesus alone is great and glorious! To Him be all glory and to us, poor creatures, be all shame! Remain in your nothingness before Him, and consider yourself most blessed when, for love of Him and for His glory, you are weighed down by tribulation.

It is with cause that you are angry with me because of all you have to suffer on account of those souls who are so sorely tempted, for it was I who placed this burden on you. Now let me tell you the whole story, for it seems to me that I have not done so before.

LETTERS TO MOTHER MARIE DE VILLENEUVE

From the very beginning one person urged me to undertake the founding of a society that would work for the Negro missions. My great weakness made me fear the taking on of the additional burden of a society for women, and I felt incapable of making such a decision. I honestly believed that I was too weak for this heavy responsibility. I felt extreme repugnance for and a sort of horror of launching such an enterprise; hence my great joy and consolation when I got word of your community.

I frankly confess that I preferred that Our Lord should entrust such a work to you than to me. This shows you what sort of a man I am. All this took place before I became acquainted with Rose and Louise. Father Tisserant was their first director and he helped them to decide their vocation; after his departure they asked me for similar help. I had already made arrangements with you, or had at least nearly completed such arrangements, for Louise came to you at Castres only a few weeks after they had contacted me.

It was always my intention that they should be attached solely to your community and be members of it like the other Sisters. It would have been impossible for me to speak otherwise since I always loathed the idea of being in charge of another community besides my own. Therefore I could not possibly have entertained such a thought. On the contrary, it was my firm intention that these good souls should become members of your community alone and that I should not have any authority over them. It seems to me that I always made it clear to them that I did not want to interfere in the conduct of your work, or mix in the business of their own consciences. I merely told them that they might write to me if they so wished. . . .

They are correct in saying that I told them that they would be sent to the missions, and that they would not be employed in any other work in France. This was quite natural. These

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poor girls had no other vocation than that of going to the missions, and I could not have sent them to you except under the condition that they would go there. I remember that their first director, Father Tisserant, often said to me: "If you send them to the convent of Castres, they will be kept in France and their plans will be frustrated." I always answered him that this was the condition I would lay down, that they should be sent to the Negro missions. I recall that I wrote this to you. I also recall telling you when I was in Paris (I don't know on what occasion) that you were quite free to keep them in France, but I added, "provided you employ them in work for the missions, in which case you would fulfill the conditions." You could, for instance, keep Louise in the novitiate to form those who are destined for the missions, and she would not be able to object to this. I believe that it was on the occasion of that visit that I told you about that.

I know well that you do not want to exclude them from the work of the missions, and this is precisely why I believe it would be prudent for you to convince them that they will go to the missions, and give them this promise. This, I feel, would restore their peace of mind. It would have been a good thing if the question had not been raised at all since you do intend to send them there anyway.

I think that all you can do is to dismiss those among them whom you consider unsuitable for the missions, or propose to them that they remain under the condition that they will be employed in other works in France. But you have a duty to send those you consider suitable to the missions, because of the agreement, at least tacit, which you made with them.

Perfect obedience would demand that they be more adaptable and docile, but I believe that it would not be good to speak about that at this time, especially since they are still so far away from the end of their novitiate. It would be well to help them to keep in mind the thought of their first voca-

tion, and to let them grow peacefully in the virtues that they need and which they still lack. When we have to deal with people with lively imaginations, it is important to keep away strong temptations until we find that they are firmly established in virtue. Once we arouse such thoughts and imaginings we are in for trouble. Self-love will partly rule them, and sometimes it will gain even absolute dominion; it will show itself in all its power and might lead them to unfortunate extremes, at times even for a long period. We must not be astonished at the distress of these poor girls, seeing that their imagination is aroused and they are still weak in virtue. They are separated from their friends and their own part of the country, and such circumstances easily arouse grave temptations, for these girls now imagine that all their hopes are shattered. Let us not forget that they left everything to follow the vocation to which they thought God had called them.

When ardent minds meet such obstacles as the present they are greatly irritated. That is why I entreat you, dear Reverend Sister, to have sympathy for these poor souls in their present condition, to console them by removing the stumbling block from their path. Reassure them by promising that they will go to the missions. Be content with urging them to apply themselves to the acquiring of the virtues that are necessary for such a work.

Pardon me for pleading the cause of those good girls with so much vigor. I owe it to them since it was because of my promise that they left all to join your community. It was because they felt sure that they would go to the missions that they came to you. If I were you I should encourage that intention in their minds. It would be unjust for me to abandon them at this stage.

Moreover, you know that I am not afraid of speaking my mind to you, as you yourself wish I should do, and you have

given me permission to do so. I tell you, therefore, that this question should not have been raised and that they should not have been given the occasion for this distress. Now that the thing has happened, I see no other way of undoing the harm than that you should reassure and calm them. How could I now tell them that they ought to be resigned to remain in France, when I had given them the assurance that they would go to the missions, and since I am convinced that you would do them an injustice by keeping them there against their wishes? All I can say to them is that the more perfect way for them would be to submit to the holy will of God. I cannot tell them that they must submit to the will of their Superior rather than to God's will, since, having already told them that it was God's will that they should go to the missions, this would upset them. Forgive me for insisting on this point, but I believe that this is the source of all that is troubling them. I did not appreciate this when I wrote my first letter; had I done so I would have mentioned it.

You will object that you are not allowed to accept subjects on the condition that they will go to the missions and will not be employed in France. That is a question which does not concern me at the moment, since it applies to another matter. It does not enter into the question we are now discussing. The only thing we ought to consider is what are the conditions under which these girls *were* received. The condition was that they would be sent to the missions, and it is easy to see that those conditions *were necessary at the beginning*. I was on the point of forming a society for the missions and you had a like desire. With you, however, it was only one project of a number. You had other works in view besides the missions, but you had difficulties. When I heard about your project, I gladly seized the opportunity which divine Providence gave me, and sent you the girls

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who were destined to enter the small society for the missions. You, on your part, were in need of such subjects to initiate and give a decisive direction to your society. It was therefore quite natural for both of us (incomplete in original) ; so the condition, that they were to be sent to the missions, was accepted and the agreement was made accordingly.

On my part I could not have sent you those postulants had I not been assured that you would send them to the missions, for I had the double duty of safeguarding the interests of those sent to you and also the interests of a community that was destined to labor for the Negro missions. Now, if I had not laid down that condition, how could I have taken a chance on the future of those girls? Secondly, I should have run the risk of failing in my plan for a society that would work for the Negro missions, since if your community failed to give me the assurance that these girls would be sent to the Negro missions, I should then have had nothing to go on except your good desire for such a work. If, on the other hand, I had left the decision regarding those girls entirely in your hands, so that you could either keep them in France or send them to the missions, I would have lost the few vocations that were at my disposal.

This then is why I ask you once more to reassure these ladies and to grant them the fulfillment of their desires. The time of their departure, however, must be entirely in your hands, though I would strongly urge that you should not mention this latter fact. Do not let them think that you will keep them after their novitiate in order to give them further training. What good would come from telling them such things? You should leave the matter alone and turn their minds away from it.

I also entreat you, through your love of God, to put aside your lack of confidence, to reestablish perfect accord between you and the girls and to avoid showing any signs of distrust.

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Look upon their temptation as something that will pass, let things return to the condition in which they were in the beginning, and reestablish mutual confidence. If you wish I shall not send any other postulants except under the condition that they will be willing to remain in France if that is necessary.

A priest of Arras spoke to me about two other candidates. I shall tell them that this is the condition under which they will be accepted. With regard to the four or five, make an exception, even if it happens to be contrary to your original intention. We must admit that, at least, there has been a misunderstanding in the matter. Do not be so unbending. I shall explain things thus in my letters to Rose and Louise. You can see that something is amiss and that they are not entirely wrong, since Pauline, who does not even know what malice is, shares the opinion of the others. When I consider the matter I feel certain that something is wrong, and the only thing I can find is that they think that their original plan of going to the missions will be thwarted.

Rose says that she wants to be the first to leave for the missions. This is childishness. She will go when she is sent. She is excited, and when she is in that state she gets out of control. Make use of every means to calm and sustain those girls. Do not show that you are dissatisfied with or distrust or dislike those who are suffering temptations of this kind. You ought to support them with all your heart. If we succeed in calming them, I believe that we need not worry as to how things will turn out with them. They are undergoing a very serious temptation but it will pass. Those who have suffered harm will recover and will attain a high degree of perfection.

My opinion about Louise should not influence your own estimate of her. I am not acquainted with the circumstances and therefore not in a position to pass judgment on the mat-

ter. Still I cannot convince myself that all that happened was purely in the imagination. It is easy to say things like that in a speculative way, but from what I learned of Louise before she left for Castres, I find it difficult to change my opinion of her. It is, of course, quite true that every time the imagination plays a part in such things, self-love inevitably manifests itself. Louise was at heart sincerely and deeply humble. She preserved this humility during the first period of her state. It was only later on that self-love showed itself, and I think that the imaginary state appeared only at the end. In any case discussing this matter leads nowhere; the important thing is that she be cured of her present temptation and restored to peace.

You should, I think, be on your guard against something which usually occurs when we deal with people who are suffering severe temptations. We are always inclined to judge unfavorably all that has gone before, and to misinterpret such things in the light of the bad things we see in the temptation. This prejudice comes from our natural distrust of our neighbor and our irritation with those who are tempted in this manner. Add to this the fact that we are afraid that we have made a mistake, and this fear is rooted in self-love. We should be full of charity, and try to overcome our distrust by practising simplicity. Curb your displeasure, your opposition and irritation, and cultivate a great spirit of kindness and tenderness towards those souls who are so severely tempted. Tend always to judge them favorably; despise that fear and timidity which prompts you to think, act, judge and speak to the disadvantage of those who are so worthy of our compassion, for we are thus prompted because we are anxious to safeguard *our* honor in our own eyes and in the eyes of others. We should humble ourselves and remain in our nothingness before God, desire to become anathema in the eyes of men, and to appear ignorant, superstitious and des-

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picable, for the sake of serving the spiritual good of those whom we ought to love and treat more tenderly than others. If we do not see clearly what is their trouble, let us suspend our judgment, refraining from favorable or unfavorable opinions, treat them with tender affection, alleviate their pains and deal with their temptations as one deals with physical ailments.

Do not think, my dear Reverend Mother, that I reproach you for the way you have judged and acted towards them. God preserve me from such a thing! I only wish to describe what ordinarily takes place in souls that are weak, wretched and full of malice. We are very much inclined to sacrifice souls, and I am worse in this respect than everyone else. I have experience in such matters. I have had to deal with at least half a dozen souls that were tempted like those ladies. I considered the unfavorable judgments that were generally made against them, and the successive mistakes made by the critics, and I beg you to avoid such mistakes. I myself have struggled for a long time against this wrong method of dealing with afflicted souls. I have committed many faults of that sort and have learned to correct my way just a little, but at the expense of those dear souls. Oh, how much the Lord will punish me for it! I tremble and fully deserve it! For when we devour sick sheep, because we are seeking our own advantage, we are truly wolves. Almost all those whom I have seen undergoing such terrible trials, except one with whom I am not in contact, have been freed from that state. They have become more or less perfect, but all have great qualities and they immolate themselves constantly for the glory of the Master.

Let me give you just one example of a person, which is an extreme case. He was a young man who, like all those to whom I referred, had a very active mind. He was very fervent at the beginning and everyone admired him. Yet

there was still in him a remnant of self-love; he certainly had very much more of it than Louise ever had. This, however, went almost unnoticed by others. It so happened that this man was placed in a situation where others opposed his excellent spiritual views. As a result of these contradictions, or for some other reason, he fell into a state of mind such as I have never seen in any other person. The temptations to which Rose and Louise are subject are not one tenth as strong as that which he endured.

Now, it was said at the time that his initial fervor was evil. Some said that he would become insane, others that he would never do any good, and all spoke according to their own views. Men who were very devout and well versed in spiritual matters, three in particular, were asked for their opinion. Two of them judged him very unfavorably, and recommended that he adopt means that were very bad. The third judged more in accord with the charity of Jesus Christ, but he was the only one of the six or seven consulted, who refrained from judging unfavorably. All the others yielded to a feeling of displeasure, to that natural distrust which is always prompt to suspect evil and claims to have discovered it as soon as there is any basis for conjecture. The result of all this was that that good man was finally freed from his temptation. He later became profoundly humble, and is one of the holiest and most zealous priests I know.

Let us learn then from that example not to be eager to condemn souls that are tempted, nor to judge them severely; nor ought we to despair of their future perfection. We must bear all things with the charity and humility of Jesus Christ, our Master. We are much more unbearable to Him than these poor souls are to us, and He suffers us, who are but slaves. How much more ought we to bear the pains and ills of His children! If He consoles us who have offended Him and deserve a thousand times to be lost in hell, ought not we to

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console these poor sick sheep whom He has entrusted to us? Have courage then, my very Reverend Mother, be strong in the faith that is animated by charity, be vile in your own eyes, be ready to endure all things for the love of Jesus, and carry out peacefully, calmly, humbly and vigorously the work He has confided to you. One does not save souls without being crucified.

May the love of Jesus produce these sentiments in your heart!

Entirely yours in the holy love of Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

33

Letter Thirteen La Neuville, December 13, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 460

Jesus, Mary, Joseph

Dear Reverend Mother:

I have delayed rather long in replying to you because I wished first to fix up our affairs with the Ministry. The matter is now settled and the freedom of our missionary work is also guaranteed. A salary of 1,500 francs a year will be given to each missionary. That means that three such salaries will go to each station and 400 francs to each Brother. Besides this the government will provide a chapel and a residence for each community, free passage and enough money for the trousseau and for the journey from here to the port of embarkation. These are the principal advantages. Moreover, our sick will be cared for at the expense of the State. The government will supply the things needed for worship

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and the missionaries have the right to be accepted aboard government ships for the voyages they have to make.

I trust that at a later date, when you are ready, God will also take care of your affairs. I think that we should not rush into things, for the results would be less satisfactory. Let us place our confidence in God and our good Mother and all will go well.

Never allow yourself to become dejected because of crosses and tribulations. You will learn more and more what it means to undertake a work for the glory of God, especially when it is an entirely new society you wish to establish. If you had merely considered your personal interests, your own comfort and peace here in this world, it would have been so much better to enter a cloister and to live there as a simple lay Sister. But a person who wants to belong to God does not do what pleases herself. She must not seek her own satisfaction but must be at the disposal of the Sovereign Master, ready to be employed at anything He considers good, and ready, if necessary, to be despised by all creatures. Let us not have proud thoughts, thinking that we are undertaking *great* things for the Lord; but we must remain prostrate before Him and consider ourselves most fortunate when, for the fulfilling of His designs, we are sacrificed to His adorable will in any way He desires.

It is understood that we ought to work with all our strength at the work God is pleased to entrust to us, but we must avoid making this "our own work". We should make use of all the means He puts at our disposal to do the work as perfectly as possible for His glory, but all the time remaining at peace and not being excessively concerned about success. It is our task to plant and to water; to Him belongs the task of bringing forth and gathering fruits. These fruits are His, and His are the field and the laborers. Hence He has the full right to employ the laborers as He wishes, when he

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wishes, and for any purpose of His choice. He, the Master, decides whether He will allow us to produce fruits or remain without them, make us labor or keep us idle; let us be prepared before Him, to be used as His instrument, or to accomplish nothing if such be His wish.

Divine goodness will use the interior and exterior crosses you have to bear, in order to train you in that heavenly life and greatly increase your attachment to God. In accordance with God's designs there will come one storm after another. Be strong in faith and always remain prostrate at His feet in humility and love. Be willing to be used by Him according to His wishes, and desire to belong to Him and not to self, so that the work in which you are engaged may be His and not yours, and the souls you serve may be sanctified for Him and not for your own satisfaction, or by your own choice.

You will have to suffer sorrows and great afflictions in order that those souls may be sanctified. He has suffered much for you and you are not yet sanctified. Their sanctification will be accomplished through you and at the expense of your poor nature. Have courage, therefore, my very Reverend Mother! It is a blessed thing to be able to suffer in and with Jesus. You will profit by your sufferings if you bear them with humility and love as you prostrate yourself in His presence. In general I approve your method of dealing with these good souls.

I am certain that the good little Adèle will accept with resignation whatever will be decided with regard to her postulancy. If Miss Morillon is not a suitable candidate, what can we do? Pray that the Lord may enlighten you. It is your responsibility to decide whether a person is suitable or not. I had nothing but presumptions in favor of those I sent you, especially since I had not been their spiritual director, nor had I been long enough acquainted with them to know

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them better than you. I have told you often that I do not wish to interfere in the affairs of your convent or the way you conduct these affairs. What you and your assistant decide on such occasions is much better than any advice I can give, since you have those persons right under your eyes, whereas I have rarely even seen them.

I shall write to Father Topping soon. It might be well for Pauline to write also. I shall also write to Mrs. Tisserant about the group. When I get news from our missionaries I shall transmit it to you. Remember us always in your prayers, and I shall not forget to offer all of you, together with all your intentions and good desires, at the holy altar, that you may all be sacrificed to the glory of the Master. Be pure and holy victims worthy of the Holy of Holies.

Your most devoted servant in Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

P.S. Father Schwindenhammer asks me to send you his greetings. His sisters have decided to enter the Society of the Good Shepherd. He had already mentioned this during the holidays. I did not think it proper to try to persuade them to do otherwise, and in any case it would be useless. He has been anxious to write to you for some time but I prevented him from doing so, since I did not think it necessary to make you pay the postage on such a letter. He wishes to be excused. Father Topping is not in a hurry with regard to the two subjects of whom I have spoken to you. He would like to wait until you have a house in the North. I hope that this will be decided within a year.

Letter Fourteen La Neuville, March 20, 1844 Vol. 6, p. 128

J. M. J.

Dear Reverend Mother :

I owe you an apology for not having written for so long. My last letter crossed yours and those of our very dear Sisters. After that I had so much work on hand that I neglected my correspondence for a time.

A few days ago I met poor Miss Morillon. I am not surprised to learn that you dismissed her. The poor girl was very upset and I have done my best to console her. It is painful to see others suffer, but you cannot keep a person in your house who will never be able to adopt its spirit. Therefore do not worry about the pain she caused you by the things she may have said before she left.

You must not be surprised to find the Sisters still so imperfect. Where can we find souls that are perfect? It may sometimes happen that we meet those that are less proud, less difficult, but it rarely happens that such evil tendencies do not manifest themselves sooner or later. I prefer such things to manifest themselves during the novitiate than later on. The good little Adèle, who is doing so well now, will later experience trouble. We must take that for granted and we should not always take as a misfortune what is sometimes only a temptation.

If I may add to the advice I have already given you, I would suggest that you allow great liberty of spirit in your house and never upset anyone. Correct faults at the right time and in the right place with mildness and in a way that aims at consoling the offenders. Every correction that agitates and embitters is one that is badly administered. It is

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possible that the trouble with the novices from this part of the country was that they were bewildered. It is important for a community with members from various parts of the country that a common bond of charity should be formed amongst them, and that the question of whether they are Bretons or Normans should never be brought up. Teasing about nationality, even if it be done in a joke, leaves a bad aftertaste.

I received news from Father Tisserant of Haiti. It is probable that in a year or so he will ask you to send Sisters to that country. He found it in a deplorable condition. It is full of bad priests and there are scarcely any good ones. The people have the faith and are full of goodwill but they are unbelievably ignorant. Hence numerous superstitions and corruption are prevalent. British Protestants are doing their very best to win over the country.

At the time of Father Tisserant's arrival there was great antagonism to the Catholic religion and the Protestants were in favor. Father Tisserant had an interview with the President; and one of his relatives who is a good and influential man also did his best to make the atmosphere more favorable to the Catholic religion. The government urged Father Tisserant to provide good priests. I wish I had half a dozen to send him in October as this would do much good. I have just sent two priests, one a member of my Congregation and the other a secular priest, and also one Brother. It is so important that we help that country. If we do not do so within a year or eighteen months, it will be lost to the Protestants. If, on the contrary, we are able to send even six or eight priests, I feel sure that within eight months or a year it will be saved and the harm done by Protestantism will be undone. The Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda wants us to take charge of it. I should like to be able to send a greater number, or at least to send a few toward the end of the year, say in the month of October, but I need all those

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who will be ready to go at that time (six or seven) for Guinea. I cannot abandon the countries in which communities have already been started.

It is probable that as soon as priests are established in Haiti, Father Tisserant will make a request to you for Sisters. The good to be done is immense. It is probable that you will find candidates there even for your houses in Europe, but not at the beginning. Since the faith in that country is very strong, it is likely that you will get vocations in the good families there. Pray and make your dear Sisters pray that God's will may be done and that we may not put any obstacles in its way.

I have not yet received any news from our missionaries of Guinea since their arrival in that country, but this does not mean that they are late in writing to me, since I have had more recent news from there than has been received at the Ministry.

Place your trust in God and He will not abandon you. He who labors for God's glory must expect pains and burdens, but God's help is never wanting to those who are faithful to Him.

I forgot to mention that when Father Tisserant arrived in Haiti, he was very upset because he was unable to exercise any ministry. The pastor of Port-au-Prince absolutely forbade anyone to instruct the people, and he himself did not give them any instruction, for he said that instruction did not do them any good. For this city with a population of at least thirty thousand souls, he held divine services only in the parochial church, although there was another church, a Cemetery Church, at the opposite end of the city. Father Tisserant spoke about this to the President when he met him and an order was issued to the pastor by the President and the municipality to the effect that :

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1. The catechism should be taught twice a week in the parochial church;
2. An instruction should be given to the people of the Cemetery Church every Sunday;
3. The pastor must send priests to administer the sacraments to the people living in the suburb of Mornes.

Father Tisserant was charged with all this. Finally, baptism should be administered by the pastor or by others every time children were presented for the sacrament. That wretched man (the pastor) did not allow anyone to baptize after dinner, even if people were dying! This gives you an idea of the priests of that country, for this man is not one of the worst.

Respectfully yours in Jesus and Mary.

Your most devoted servant,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN,
missionary of the Holy Heart
of Mary

45

Letter Fifteen

April 23, 1844

Vol. 6, p. 172

J. M. J.

Dear Reverend Mother:

This is my reply to your letter of April 3. I was on a journey when your letter arrived.

I have not received any further news about Haiti. The newspapers speak of troubles that have started in that country. I hope that there will not be any unhappy results. It would

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be a good thing if the present government were to remain in power. Let us pray! God will do what He judges proper.

I believe that English is of no use in Haiti. There are some English Protestants there who try to lead the country into error but it is not the English language that is used. There are two sections in the island, one called San Domingo where the language is Spanish and in the other French is spoken. Therefore, strictly speaking, French would be sufficient, but Spanish would be very useful and it might be necessary later on.

I have not yet received news from Guinea. Our Fathers wrote to me from the Cape of Palms where they had been only about two weeks, and hence they were unable to give precise information. They did not remain in that section which is one of the least productive on the coast because Protestant ministers have been settled there for over eight years and a Protestant colony is established there.

Bishop Barron will no doubt write as soon as he sees the possibility of installing Sisters in that country. It would be imprudent to start off with such a foundation. I bless the Lord for giving you peace. We relish it with so much more consolation when it comes after great storms and when it comes unexpectedly. Everything can be overcome with patience, confidence in God and humble prayer. The more you advance in solid virtue, the more indulgent you will become to the weaknesses and failings of your Sisters; you will be more gentle towards them and more at peace in your soul. I can do no more than give you general rules for the direction of souls. Since I do not know the practical circumstances, it is impossible for me to enter into details.

A Superior of a certain convent told me that I was too mild in my direction and that I should be more severe with women. Another said that I did not understand women. Well, I readily accept condemnation if I am wrong, but I find it hard

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to abandon the spirit of Our Lord in His dealings with souls. I want to avoid following the impulses of my evil nature in the direction of souls and do not like to abandon the fundamental principles governing such direction.

For yourself, dear Mother, do what the Lord suggests to you. My way of acting is different. I am more considerate towards women than towards men because of the difference of their characters, and because the imagination of women is more sensitive and impressionable. I am not indulgent to their imaginings but treat them with consideration. The results, so far, have proved me right.

The confidence of those who are devoted to God's glory never meets with disappointment. God will not be outdone by His children. His merciful action may be delayed but it will come with interest.

I shall unite my heartfelt prayers to yours for the intention you have recommended to me. I was greatly consoled by what you wrote about the Sisters.

Respectfully yours in the charity of Jesus and Mary.

Your most humble and devoted servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Missionary of the Holy Heart
of Mary

46

Letter Sixteen La Neuville, June 18, 1844 Vol. 6, p. 241

Reverend and dear Mother :

I have delayed my reply until I should have received the letter of Adèle, in order to save you the extra postage.

It is a blessing that your building is now completed. It is very important for the regularity of a community that it be

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properly housed and that the various parts be properly arranged to serve the needs of the members. A building thus planned has great advantages.

Always have great confidence in God, and divine goodness will enable you to bring the project to a happy conclusion. The work of the missions in general, and that of the Negroes in particular, is a work of the Cross. We have to suffer and suffer much. Do not imagine that your pains and your need for practicing patience are at an end. This is something that will last as long as life itself. Consider yourself very fortunate then, my Reverend Mother, that divine Mercy has chosen you to have a share in the Cross of Jesus. From the beginning you have had to live in pain, to walk amidst crosses, to drag a heavy burden, following in the steps of the crucified Jesus. Something of this will remain with you for the great day of judgment and all your Sisters will benefit by it for their sanctification.

Further, it is in this way that God's work will be perfected. We must learn to suffer, and this with patience, love, sweetness and humility, and Our Lord will then be with us. Thanks to God's goodness, crosses have not been wanting to us until now, nor have the graces to bear them fruitfully and holily been denied us.

I decided not to do anything further about the postulant who was offered by Father Topping. His letter led me to think that there was no need for it. I agree fully with you that you should follow the ordinary rules for the acceptance of subjects. When, according to these rules, we are justified in believing that a candidate will not adopt the spirit of the society, we should not accept her, unless we are morally certain that the ordinary rules do not apply in this case.

I see no prospect of obtaining anything for the trousseau of Sister Aloysia. She should write to Father Borgnier; it is possible that he might be able to do something for her.

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There has been no news about Guinea. Our missionaries have not been able to do anything. The Governor of Senegal is expected in France soon and I hope to see him. I shall tell you any news he may have that is interesting.

I am anxious to make my journey to the South. I hope to be able to come on the occasion of the departure of our missionaries in October or November. However, I am not yet sure about anything. God will arrange things for the best.

I have the honor to be in Jesus and Mary,

Your most humble and devoted servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Missionary of the Holy Heart
of Mary

47

Letter Seventeen La Neuville, September 4, 1844 Vol. 6, p. 332

J. M. J.

My dear Reverend Mother :

I begin with a remark concerning the end of your letter, which, incidentally, filled me with great joy. You see now clearly that it is a good thing to be faithful to our good Master and to place all your confidence in Him. I never doubted that He would bless your community and yourself. The work is now established and I feel certain that Divine Providence will also provide the money you need.

The work of the "Refuge" is very difficult but it is perhaps the most fruitful. It is a source of great suffering but also of great consolation. You were right to separate it from your

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own house, since that kind of work casts a shadow on a boarding school that is housed under the same roof.

Divine goodness has called you to labor for the good of souls in His Church. With all my heart I implore Our Lord to grant that your dear Congregation may be a faithful handmaid in His holy house. Consider yourself one whom the great King wishes to employ in His house, and do lovingly all the work He entrusts to you, no matter how low and menial it may seem.

I sent your letter to Father Dalmond after I had added something about your intentions. He forgot to reply, either because he was busy or else he may wish to reply directly to yourself. I think that a knowledge of pharmacy would be more useful than anything else in the missions, and you would do well to have also a little practical medicine. There are some books on this subject used by the Sisters of Charity and they might be useful to you in many respects. When I go to Paris I shall consult a physician about tropical diseases and ask him for a list of books that could be useful for missionaries. I shall send all useful information regarding this to you.

It is absolutely necessary that your Sisters should study Sakalave, the language of Madagascar. These languages are easy and one can acquire speaking knowledge sufficient to hold conversation with the inhabitants in about three months. If Father Dalmond has not already sent you books for learning the language, I shall send some as soon as possible, or I shall bring them if I am able to journey to the South. However, I shall not be able to come before Spring.

The 1,300 francs that are owed to Sister Paule have not yet arrived. I doubt that Father Tisserant has sent them, as he himself has to return to France. I think that he will be here about the middle of next month. It is possible that he will ask you to give him Sisters, if not immediately, at

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least in a year or so. I almost forgot to remind you that you should not send less than four Sisters to Madagascar. Father Dalmond would not, I am sure, want less than that. He is not as badly off as you think and his friends in the island of Bourbon are helping him a lot. Your Sisters will not cost you much more once they are established in that country.

I trust that Father de Regnier is now enjoying the beatific vision, for he died a death worthy of envy. If he is in heaven, you may count on his protection, as you cannot imagine how interested he was in your work, of which he spoke very often.

I have the honor of being in the charity of Jesus and Mary,

Your most humble and devoted servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

48

Letter Eighteen Paris, October 31, 1845 Vol. 7, p. 354

J. M. J.

Reverend and dear Mother :

I failed to reply to your letter as I was very busy and had to go on two journeys. At any rate the things you wrote about did not demand a reply immediately. I am writing this letter from Paris and have not yours before me as I write, so you will have to excuse me if I forget to reply to anything you mentioned.

I came to Paris because I received a letter from the Ministry of the Navy. They made advantageous proposals while asking nothing that was burdensome and leaving us full apostolic liberty. I submitted my proposals and they accepted

them. They will pay 1,500 francs a year for each missionary, will provide a house and a chapel for each station and all that is needed for Sacred Worship. Besides that they will pay the board, during their time in the novitiate and house of studies, of such missionaries as we put at their disposal. The agreement has not been completed but these conditions have already been examined and agreed to. I shall give them a definite reply in a few days.

I spoke to the Director of the Colonies who inquired if you were in Paris, and I told him that you were not. The civil authorities are anxious to have Sisters. I stressed the importance and usefulness of nuns and they agreed. You may be sure that they will make an appeal to you, but since they were not in a hurry to get Sisters, I considered it inopportune to press the matter. It is important that we should not give them the impression that we want to force the question, but neither should we show indifference. I gave your address to the Director but since he did not make a note of it I think that he will not take up the matter immediately. No doubt he will ask for your address when the time comes to consider the matter, and when he does I shall let you know. I think that it would not be prudent for you to initiate anything, as I feel certain that they will open negotiations with you. The Minister of the Navy is a good and zealous man and is convinced that nothing will be accomplished in that country without the help of priests and religious Sisters. When you are ready to send Sisters for one or two communities I shall know how to remind them, but I feel sure that this will not be necessary and that they will themselves initiate the arrangements.

They will probably begin by gathering information about your house from the Bishop of Alby. You should see to it that his reply makes it clear that you are what they seek. He ought not to mention that you are not certain about your vocation to the missions. Therefore it might be prudent to

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explain gradually to the Bishop that you have finally decided that your call is for the missions and in particular the missions to the Negro. You might find it easy to convince him of this if you tell him how many subjects have presented themselves to you for the sole purpose of going to the missions and that this is the wish of the older religious. You see then, my dear Reverend Mother, that after the crosses and anxieties, you receive consolations. Be filled with confidence, struggle for a few months, live in poverty, and you will see that the good Lord will come to your aid.

I have a still further cause of hope but as it has not yet matured I cannot give you any further information. It concerns another source of help which Divine Providence seems to wish to put at our disposal to help us in our mission to West Africa. Let us pray to and have confidence in God and not in men. It is for Him that we work and He will not abandon us. I hope that our poor novices will persevere in peace.

I remember that you have not told me anything further about Louise. There is little that I can say about her. However, all you have said about her does not convince me that she has always been in a state that was illusory and imaginary. What you first said in her favor seemed to show that her state was good and supernatural. I did not dare to make an absolute pronouncement on that subject, but I thought I saw favorable signs. What you have told me since seems to show that her present state is a result of her imaginings. I had little fear until you mentioned visions; this latter rather worried me. What you told me recently does not, to my mind, in any way run counter to our first impression. However, I have no definite opinion on the matter nor do I worry about it since I am in no way charged with the direction of her soul. But it is important that you should not make a mistake in her regard. You may be correct in what you have judged but the reasons you give do not allow me to come to the same

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conclusion as you. It is because of this that I persist in repeating that I do not agree with your opinion, even though I have no fixed opinion of my own. I persist in order that you may distrust your opinion in some measure.

If I myself had to guide that soul, I would try to forget what you have told me and I should distrust everybody no matter how wise, for I feel certain that prejudices greatly influence us either for or against a person. I find that in certain cases it is as dangerous to allow ourselves to be influenced against supernatural things of that kind as it is to allow ourselves to be influenced in their favor. I think that the case of Louise might be such a case. It is possible, in her present state, that your direction and manner of acting towards her might, as a result of a wrong judgment, do her grave harm. I say "it is possible," because I am not sufficiently acquainted either with her state or your method of dealing with her to judge properly.

Please do not be annoyed at my seeming distrust of your direction. I assure you that I distrust my own just as much. Whenever someone, in whose soul extraordinary things seem to be taking place, comes to me, I am sad and worried. Do not imagine that I consider myself more clever than others and that that is the reason why I offer objections to your opinion. I can tell you truthfully that I rarely see things clearly. I have to direct those who come to me but I remain totally blind. It would be a great joy to me if no one ever asked me for direction. But I can say frankly that neither have I found any others who have a clear view of such matters. There are innumerable errors in all sorts of circumstances; errors regarding the state of a soul, errors regarding God's manner of acting in a soul, errors regarding the dispositions of those who seek direction.

O my dear Mother, how insignificant we are! How little our worth, how little our knowledge! Let us crawl in the

LETTERS TO MOTHER MARIE DE VILLENEUVE

dust and remind ourselves of what we really are. Woe to us who have charge of others! It is bad enough to have to drag our own miseries, why must we also have others realize how poor we are?

Let us look on these souls as a precious trust and be on our guard against spoiling or losing them. Let us ask Our Lord to take care of His good souls, for we are quite incapable of such a charge. It is so easy and comfortable to preach to others and to urge them to do what we ourselves fail to do.

May the peace of Our Lord be with you!

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

49

Letter Nineteen Amiens, May 31, 1847 Vol. 9, p. 154

J. M. J.

My very dear Mother:

I have a pleasant surprise for you as well as for our good Sisters. We shall have an unexpected visit from Father Bessieux who has returned for a time from the depths of Guinea. He it was who was chosen by Divine Providence to be the occasion, or rather the instrument, of establishing relations between us. You will be even more pleased to learn from Father Bessieux himself that he wishes to have your dear Sisters in Gabon and Dakar. I am not without hope that this can be arranged. I shall not go into any details as Father Bessieux will be in a better position to do so. He will not settle anything finally, as he can only make remote prepara-

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tions and arrange certain things and then must report to the Vicar Apostolic. There are financial difficulties in the way, but I do not doubt but that Divine Providence will solve that problem. The harvest seems to be ripe or almost so, and your Sisters would accomplish an immeasurable amount of good for the benefit of the poor Negroes.

I am happy to have this opportunity of reawakening the courage of our good Sisters. I hope that they will not have lost anything by waiting and that God will reward them for their patience. They will learn more and more that it is always well to wait until God's own time has arrived. The impatience that is rooted in our evil nature wants to hasten things, and, were such a thing possible, even "to create God's moment." And then, if unfortunately we accomplish something before the time laid down in God's eternal designs, we are elated and self-satisfied. But as soon as difficulties arise, we are like men with broken arms and legs, troubled and anxious, and discouragement enters our souls and replaces the joy and assurance and unruly elation we first experienced.

When God has designs of grace and mercy in regard to good souls who love Him, even though they may love Him with an impetuous love, He thwarts their beautiful schemes. They hurry, rush forward and are out of breath; they want to reach the goal before they have started. God arrests their progress by placing all kinds of obstacles in their path. They fall, rise, and start to run once more, and are out of breath. He closes one exit after another and finally they are brought to a full stop. They then collapse, full of sadness, agitation and discouragement. But bit by bit they come to realize their weakness and their nothingness. They humble themselves before God, and realizing their extreme need of help, turn to God to find support. Peace gradually returns to their souls. They begin by becoming resigned because they see there is nothing they can do, and they end by submitting completely

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to the divine guidance. It is then a new phase begins for them. Their life now is less inspired by nature and is more animated by grace. Their desires, though strong, are moderate and submissive to God's good pleasure. Their intentions are purified and they submit to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Such a soul becomes gradually an instrument, at first a poor and defective one, rusty and bent, but sufficiently pliable, in the divine hands that use it, to allow it to cooperate a little for the glory of Him who alone accomplishes all that is good. That pliability, which makes the soul a faithful instrument in God's hands, comes only to a soul whose first desires and hopes have been overthrown. When the soul is thus restored and remade, God's moment arrives, but, lest the soul fall back into its first impetuosity, it comes gently. Blessed is the soul that is faithful!

You know well, my dear Reverend Mother, at whom these reflections are aimed. I think they retrace part of the story of our dear Sisters whom the Lord has finally made good and wise. He has had a hard time trying to form them, but at last the work is finished and their good souls are the more beautiful and pleasing to God for it. If you should think it wise to read these remarks to them, I can see Sister Paule rejoicing in the Lord. She will say that I am mean. Sister Aurelia will lower her eyes and make a good act of submission to the good Lord. Sister Aloysia will say with joy: "This is true" and Sister Cecilia, "This is hard." Yet I feel that none of them will be angry for they all know that their souls are very dear to me and that I always pray for them.

I did not want to write directly to them about the matter since I did not know whether you wished to give them news of our plans just yet. I presume that you do wish to tell them but I felt that it was your place as their dear Mother to reveal the plans to them in the first place. If you do decide to tell

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them then I shall once more urge them to practice patience, calm submission and abandonment to God.

I urgently recommend myself to your prayers, my dear Sister, and assure you that I shall not forget you and your community in mine.

Always united to you in the charity of Jesus and Mary, in which I have the honour to be

Your most humble and devoted servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Priest of the Holy Heart
of Mary

P. S. Please give my regards to the Father Chaplain, whom I have not forgotten and to whose prayers and Holy Masses I recommend myself.

VII. LETTERS TO MISS JENNY GUILLARME

Jenny Guillarme was a simple working girl who, for some good reason, had left the convent and returned to live an unworldly life in the world. She made a private vow of chastity and undertook many charitable and religious works. She became well-known in her time through her recovering and restoring the famous medieval relic known as Christ's Holy Tunic of Argenteuil.

Father Eugene Dupont wrote the following in his Notes made in preparation for his deposition in favor of the Beatification of Venerable Francis Libermann (July 30, 1868) :

It was, I believe, in 1843 or 1844 that this devout person frequently came to see me at the seminary of St. Sulpice. I was extremely embarrassed on account of the marvelous things that filled her life, her zeal for good works, her miraculous cure through the Holy Tunic of Our Lord, . . . the strangeness of her habitual life which was so diversely interpreted by men. I felt that that poor soul had a very special need for a director who would judge her state correctly and guide her according to God's designs.

It was then that, while speaking with her in the parlor I mentioned Father Libermann who, at that time, was in La Neuville. She was startled when she heard the name and said, "So he has finally reached the priesthood!" I then gave her some details about his work; she had not even heard of it. I brought her in touch with Father Libermann who, realizing the seriousness of her condition, made her go to Amiens where he gave this sorely-tried soul a thorough examination during a fifteen day retreat.

Father Libermann sent me very beautiful letters on that occasion. In one of them he said: "Of all the miracles in the life of this person, the greatest is that which enabled her to escape from numerous dangers and even made her bring about the conversion of several who were intent on causing her ruin."

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It was on the occasion of that retreat that Father Libermann ordered her to write her life in all its details up to the time of her cure at Argenteuil when she was twenty years old; but after that he made her burn those notes, or he burned them himself, to prevent her from all temptation to self-love. However, I had had the opportunity to copy those notes without her knowledge. Now, I learned later from Miss Guillarme herself that, fourteen years before that date, namely at the time when she pronounced her perpetual vows, Father Faillon (Sulpician Director of the Solitude) was saying Mass with Mr. Libermann acting as acolyte. At the Communion she saw a flame descending on the head of the humble mass server and then touching her so that she made a movement as if her clothes were on fire. She understood that that young acolyte was destined to be her director and guide at some future date. All this she would be able to explain much better than I. O holy and venerated Father! Pray for me! (N. D. vol. 2, pp. 166 f.)

Despite evident good-will, the spiritual life of Miss Guillarme at first developed along strange lines, for she was poorly educated and had lacked expert guidance. Her imprudence and indiscretion had frightened off several priests who had tried to direct her soul. When Father Libermann began to guide her he wrote: "I don't think that she has acquired a single virtue. . . . Nevertheless, her will is totally directed toward God but she walks blindly, driven only by her likes, dislikes and aversions. (N. D. vol. 4, p. 336)

Father Libermann dealt firmly and prudently with this holy but strange woman. Gentle words of consolation quickly follow upon severe reprimands, to be followed in turn by exhortations to detachment from human beings and joyful surrender to God.

LETTERS TO JENNY GUILLARME

50

Letter One (*June 24 or 25, 1843*) *Vol. 7, p. XI*

J. M. J.

Dear Child of Mary :

I intended to pay you a visit to console you in the name of our good and Blessed Mother, since my words, whose meaning you have greatly exaggerated, seem to have caused you much pain. Try to calm yourself. I shall leave this note should I find you absent from home.

It would be very wrong for you to give in to anxiety. The hand of Jesus is guiding and protecting you. In answer to your question let me assure you that there was no mortal sin in anything you told me, nor was there even a serious venial fault. Your conduct, my dear child, was a little imperfect, and this is all I meant by my words.

I did not say those things in order that you might be troubled, but in order to inspire you with a little more fear of sin and more reserve, a fear that springs from love, and a reserve that is gentle and modest. Calm yourself, then, and pray constantly to our sweet Jesus, asking Him to guard your heart and to watch over your soul. Avoid dangers, and when you meet painful and unforeseen circumstances turn your eyes to our Lord Jesus, the lovable guardian of your heart, and ask Him earnestly for protection.

You must not be surprised to see that small fault which has caused you so much sorrow. I greatly regret even the smallest stain on your soul because I know that the good Master does not tolerate it since He wants you to be as pure as an angel. Hence do not be surprised that I should make much of a fault, which, in you, appeared serious to me. It

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seemed serious because, in union with Jesus and your beloved Mother, I ardently desire to see you pure and holy. That is why I want you always to abhor the least stain on your soul, as much as I abhor it. But this horror must be rooted in a tender love for Jesus, your sweet and lovable Spouse. It ought not to spring from fear, trouble and anxiety.

You should hate sin since you are a true and beloved child of Jesus and Mary. You have the title and privilege of a beloved child of Mary and a spouse and beloved sister of Jesus, and yet, despite all that, you give in to discouragement and sadness. Be quickly ashamed, and tell Jesus that you do not want such to occur again. It is certainly not proper for you to yield thus to discouragement and sadness. Should a spouse of Jesus indulge in sadness when she rests in the arm and on the adorable Heart of her divine Spouse? Can a child of Mary yield to anxiety when she reposes on the most holy Heart of her beloved Mother? Therefore be at peace.

I told you that those faults have been forgiven long ago. Jesus bears no grudge against you for faults in which your will had no share and which were rather the faults of others than of yourself. Moreover, the graces you have since received prove clearly how very sweet and tender is His love for your soul.

Remain calm regarding the future. You will not lose your soul. Jesus is its guardian and who can then steal it? I spoke as I did in order to make you more vigilant, and you have taken it too seriously and have exaggerated it. Vigilance that is mild, holy, peaceful and loving in the presence of Jesus and Mary is very pleasing to the Divine Spouse. May He alone be your guardian, your love, your all. Belong entirely to Him, in Mary, through Mary, with Mary.

I shall try to see you for a moment in the afternoon around three o'clock.

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Letter Two

July 9, 1843

Vol. 4, p. 257

May Jesus be all things in you!

My poor child:

I have made you wait a long time for a reply to the questions you asked me about the priest whose letters you entrusted to me. When I returned from Paris I had so much work waiting for me that I could not tackle your problem until now.

I do not know enough about the past life of that priest to enable me to penetrate into the recesses of his soul. His letters do not seem to justify our suspicion. Since I do not know why he moves from diocese to diocese after you, I cannot give you any positive advice, but I shall answer to the best of my ability.

I do not think that you should abandon him. He does not say why he is unable to remain in the hospital, in which, I presume, he is chaplain. If it is true that he cannot remain there, you should advise him to take charge of some parish. Tell him, however, that once he is established there, he should consider himself as placed there by Our Lord Himself, and he should not leave his post unless there are evident signs that God wants him elsewhere. Do not be astonished that this poor priest is anxious to get an appointment. This is not in harmony with perfect love of God, but we should remember that his present position will naturally tend to make him restless unless he is a very devoted man and perfectly abandoned to our good Master. If his dispositions are really those which he manifests, then he will make greater progress in divine love if he has some post other than his present one. Keep up your interest, therefore, in that poor priest (if you

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have not noticed anything worse in his desire for an appointment), and give him the advice suggested by Our Divine Master for the glory and love of God.

All for Jesus, all through Jesus, all in and with Jesus! Our Lord must be the soul of your soul and the only motive force of all your actions. Let all your joy and repose be found in Him alone, and, when He asks it of you, act with love under His inspiration to procure His greater glory.

You know the words of the Wise Man: "All the rivers come from the sea and return to it; and after they have returned, new waters come back to the same rivers to return to the sea once more."

Our souls must rest in Jesus to be nourished by His divine grace, to be strengthened and built up by His divine substance, so that it is no longer our own natural life that dwells in us, but the life of our most sweet Jesus. His divine love must flow into our souls and vivify them as our blood flows through our bodies and gives them life.

Is it then for no good purpose that Jesus becomes the food of our souls? As material food is changed into blood and vivifies our bodies, so our divine food is changed into love in our souls and gives them life, a life which is wholly divine and is the very life of Jesus. When we thus rest in Jesus, Who is our love, and live in Him and through Him, He transmits to us, in accordance with His Father's will, all the various desires of His life and all His varied gifts. It is thus that He destines some to live a life of contemplation of divine truths, others He uses to save souls, and still others for some other purpose, each according to His Father's will. And, in view of His divine designs in our regard, He, by means of divine grace, gives to us the necessary impulses. In the meantime our souls, while remaining united to the source from which those impulses come like the rivers that remain united with the sea, follow the guidance of His divine hand and

LETTERS TO JENNY GUILLARME

surrender to His heavenly action. And as those rivers tend towards the sea from which they came and finally cast themselves into it, so do we tend to Him. If the rivers did not remain united with the source from which they come they would soon go dry. So it is with our souls that are so weak, so little, so vile, so empty. They must remain always united with that divine source in order to receive of its superabundance.

That is why you should remain always united to Jesus Christ while laboring for His glory. Like a beloved spouse, rest always on His divine Heart which is a boundless sea of love. Be nourished through that most pure and chaste union with divine Love, which will come forth in torrents from His Heart and flood your soul. Those torrents will then flow like rivers from your soul to fill the souls which, through you, your Beloved wants to draw to Himself. Listen to the words of the Beloved of our souls: "If any one thirst, let him come to Me and drink, and rivers will flow from his heart." The Gospel adds: "The Savior was speaking about the Holy Spirit."

Are you thirsty? Press your lips to that source of living waters and quench your thirst with that love. Rivers will flow from your soul to fill all those whom divine love will send you.

I returned your copybook through Father Dupont. If you can, send me those that follow, and do so as soon as possible so that I may not lose the sequence and be thus hindered in making a judgment about your interior life. I hope that Our Lord will help me to see what are His wishes, but this should not prevent you from using the ordinary means of revealing to me all you can about your state of soul. When speaking of the interior graces you have received and are actually receiving at present, try to say how they came about, that is, what took place in your soul, but do this without mental tension.

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

If nothing occurs to you about them at first, attempt to describe them, then say nothing. To do this kind of thing well there must be a complete absence of constraint.

To return to the priest already mentioned. Though you remain interested in him, be a little more on your guard lest your relations with him should become improper. Do not deal with anything except the matter of his sanctification. Do not commit yourself in any way. Do not lend him money unless it be from funds set aside for alms. Give him a share of such money if you believe Our Lord expects it of you, but do not give him any of your personal money. Never undertake to pay his debts in case he becomes insolvent.

Be on your guard, therefore, against letting your relations with him degenerate into familiarity. Up to the present you have not been guilty in this respect. I wish he would refrain from calling you his friend, the "friend of his soul." Such terms are not proper. You are the friend, the dear friend, the beloved of Jesus. He is your only good, your only love. Woe to another who wishes to take what Jesus has reserved for Himself alone. Take care then, spouse of Jesus Christ; have no familiar relations with any one but Jesus. Let no one address you in familiar terms except Our Lord to whom you have consecrated yourself, and to whom you are united by sacred and unbreakable bonds which His divine love has welded between Himself and you. Woe to you if you take the least pleasure in, or encourage the least familiarity with any other than your most sweet Spouse. You would then no longer enjoy the familiarity of the divine Jesus.

Do not worry. There is at present nothing that beclouds your love for the divine Jesus. Your soul is free. I make these remarks only to inspire you with a prudent fear for the future. When that priest used such words, he merely made an unhappy choice of terms; he did nothing that was really wrong. Nevertheless, the delicacy of your love for

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Jesus, your desire to please Him alone and to have Him be pleased with you, should always prompt you to be on your guard against such things and to avoid them.

I will always consider it a crime, a very great crime, if you are negligent on that point.

(no signature)

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Letter Three

July 16 and 17, 1843

Vol. 4, p. 268

J. M. J.

My dear Child :

My poor child, may Jesus always be your consolation and your life. He wants to have your soul for Himself alone. That is why He takes away everything that might serve as a support for you. You are indeed blessed to have only your dear and divine Spouse for your consolation, and yet you seem to complain. Oh ! don't complain. Let men abandon you leaving you alone with your beloved Spouse ; in the abandonment of your soul, His relations with you will then be so much more intimate and pure. Be satisfied when Jesus gives you someone to lead you to Him and place you in His arms. You, however, must seek and sigh only for that divine Spouse. The friend of the Spouse is meant only to guide your soul to Him ; so do not attach yourself to that friend. The latter is there to contemplate the divine goodness of Jesus towards the souls He unites to Himself and to whom He wishes to communicate Himself more fully. This friend is filled with joy when he sees those great favors, and the reason for his joy is that he hears the pure, holy voice of Jesus. All his satisfaction and joy must be in Jesus alone, and in seeing

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His goodness towards the souls He has chosen to be united to His superabundant love. But, if the friend must strive to adorn and prepare those souls for their heavenly union with their Divine Spouse, how great must be the detachment of those souls destined for and directed to that union? They should not abandon their Divine Spouse in order to amuse themselves with the friend of the divine Jesus.

You, therefore, receive a great grace when you meet only with crosses and disregard from men. If it were otherwise, your heart might feel inclined to divert itself seeking their affection and gratitude. Hence you must surrender completely to the outpouring of divine love, and be ready to lose all things except His divine love for you and your love for Him. Don't worry, then, and don't be afraid that the two straw supports that remain might be taken away from you. When you feel sick at heart, repose on the Heart of Jesus. Even if you fall into His arms through weakness and exhaustion, you are not to be pitied. By this I mean that if your anguish were like a swoon or an agony, you would be very fortunate and your lot would be enviable so long as you abandon yourself lovingly into Jesus' arms and let yourself fall so that you may repose on the divine Heart of your Spouse. Yes, your lot would be better than if you experienced all the delights of the spiritual life. It would, then, be a great blessing for you if the little that remains to console and encourage you here on earth were taken away. I hope, nevertheless, through the mercy of our good Master, that I will not abandon your poor soul no matter what men might say or do against me. I am the servant of all who belong or wish to belong to Jesus, my Lord. I will not commit the injustice of abandoning or refusing to help anyone in order to seek some personal advantage, or through fear of men.

You see, however, by all that is happening to you, how important it is to keep my direction secret. We should not

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invite trouble without necessity; but, on the other hand, when, in spite of our precautions, men act against us to prevent us from doing our duty for the glory of our Lord, we must remain firm and say that we prefer to displease men rather than God.

Don't be astonished when men constantly judge, condemn and contradict you. They do it for the glory of the great Lord. Esteem yourself blessed that, at your own expense, you provide men with an opportunity of manifesting their zeal for the Master's glory. They are sometimes bad-tempered in the way they ill-treat you, but at heart they are striving for their Master's glory, and it is better that you, rather than others, should be the victim of their bad temper. When they have vented their spite on you, they will be more gentle towards others and will procure the glory of Jesus Christ by their sincere desire to serve Him properly.

You should look on yourself as a dirty rag lying in the house of your good and divine Spouse, a filthy rag that disgusts all the children and servants in the house, and on which everyone wipes his hands. When you find yourself full of gall and bitterness, go and present yourself before Jesus, fall on His Heart and pour out your soul to Him. Do not fear. If men loathe you, and you accept all the dirt they throw at you in the spirit I suggested, then you are the more pleasing to the eyes of your heavenly Spouse. Be satisfied to be nothing but filth, the sweepings of the Church of God, which everybody casts out. Jesus Christ will place you like a diamond in His divine Heart.

Be on your guard against bearing ill-will towards any one. Esteem those who calumniate you, love those who hate you, and speak well about your calumniators, always of course, without telling untruths. Speak mildly, and with peace and love about all who oppose and act badly towards you. Do not speak about the evils you suffer from them. Re-

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veal this only to him whom God has given you to guide you in the ways of divine love, for he should know what opposition you meet with on the part of men. Accept all insults, calumnies, contempt, contradictions, mockeries. Bury all such things in the depths of your heart and prostrate yourself before Jesus and Mary; remain in your poverty, resting from your weariness and sorrow on those two heavenly and admirable Hearts.

Do not set limits to the crosses you are willing to bear. Accept all that come as so many precious stones and be afraid to let any escape from your grasp. What are you afraid of? Haven't you the Heart of Jesus on which to rest where you will find the strength and love necessary to bear them? Think of yourself as a target at which everybody is allowed to throw his ball, and which has no right to reject or avoid any of their casts.

You have only one right, namely, to remain at the foot of the Cross, to embrace that Cross of your Beloved, to cling to His divine wounds, to rest in His arms, to abandon yourself to Him in your anguish, and feed on His divine love. What, my poor friend, is more desirable than this? You desire to be the spouse of Jesus Crucified; would you then want to avoid the blows that are aimed at Him, and ought you not accept to be struck and torn to pieces? You desire to rest on the divine Heart of Jesus, you want to be the spouse of His Heart, and would you refuse the bitterness with which His Heart was filled?

Have courage, then, and be filled with divine love. Jesus must triumph in your poor soul. He can do so only through the Cross. He has to take you and break and crush you. He must overwhelm and annihilate you. You ought to be able to say to Jesus as Sephora said to Moses: "You are my spouse of blood." Yes, Jesus is a "spouse of blood" and especially so in your regard. You will never be the spouse of His

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Heart until you are torn by the most profound and constant sorrow.

If the Reverend Pastor offers to give you five hundred francs, unless, while giving it, he upbraids you then accept it. It would seem that Our Lord is sending that sum to you and there is no sufficient reason for refusing it.

Do not fear so much the ill-treatment of men. This fear will avail you nothing since they will not lessen their ill-treatment, whether you bear it in the right spirit or not. When you have made the last payment for the reliquary (of the Holy Tunic of Argenteuil) they will rid themselves of you in one way or another. If the Reverend Pastor does not spontaneously offer you that sum, do not take any steps to get it, but just drop the matter entirely.

I approve the way you acted in your interview with Father Icard. Go to the Seminary as rarely as possible and let your relations with Father Dupont be secret and pass unnoticed.

I am sorry that I can do nothing to lessen your sorrow in your relations with your mother. This is why I suggest that you should pay her a visit. Before you go, speak much with your good Mother in heaven so that She may be interested in the wicked mother you have on earth and cause that earthly mother to become good and to live in the love of Jesus through His grace. When you have prayed well and received Holy Communion fervently for her intention, try to find out her state and what she thinks and suffers. This will help you to speak wisely and properly handle the matter about which she is so sensitive. Do not propose to her immediately after the first meeting that she come to live with you, unless you see that she is thus disposed. I will remember her during the Holy Sacrifice. On the day that you propose to visit her, both Father Jerome and I will offer our Holy Masses for you. I do not forget you at the Memento in the Mass. You, on your part, must be a faithful spouse of Jesus. If I knew

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a good priest who was going to Paris, I would tell him about your poor mother, but at the moment I do not know of any. Be patient, for even if your mother were to go and live with your sister, she would not stay there very long, and then your turn would come. Place your confidence in Jesus and Mary, and let us pray and wait for God's own moment, for it will come.

I hope the matter regarding the Benedictines will be arranged alright. Work to that end, but in this as well as every other such matter I forbid you to use your own money, either for the establishing or supporting of the work, and do not promise anything without my permission. I should like to know first what Dom Guéranger thinks about it and whether you think you will be able to find the means for their support.

You say that you have no aptitude for mental prayer and that you are a poor girl who knows how to talk with men but not how to speak to God. Well, it doesn't matter; don't worry about that at all. Be content to remain united with the divine Jesus, to rest on the Heart of your Spouse. If you don't know what to say to Him, be content to listen. This will be much better than talking to Him. He will tell you nicer things than you could tell Him. Even if you are unable to listen to Him, which will not happen very frequently, content yourself with looking at Him and remaining at rest in His arms. At other times, when your heart is full, talk as long as your heart prompts you.

You are a child of Mary and, knowing yourself to be her child, you must love that good and holy Mother with all the affection and tenderness of your heart. Do not be afraid that the good Mother will reject you. Be patient, suffer with joy, peace and humility as she did. Remain at her side or in her arms, bearing the small straw crosses which Jesus places on

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your shoulders, and she will be pleased to see the good things our Master is doing in your soul.

I would like that you should be always reserved in speaking about yourself, and especially about the favors the good Master bestows on you. Let me know in your next letter whether you are faithful to this rule. Tell me also how things stand with regard to the lawyer about whom you spoke to me, and whether you have thrown the rest of the letters of P. L. J. on the refuse heap.

Father Favreux is feeling very well and has asked me to express his thanks to you. He will not write to you and you must not write to him nor invite him to say anything more. He seems to be a very saintly religious. Do not worry about the afflictions that I may suffer on your account. Be prudent and do not worry if the good Lord sends me crosses. Do you want to be the only one to share in the glory of the crucified Jesus? Allow full freedom to your good Master, but at the same time, we must not, through our imprudence, be the cause of faults in pious souls.

What I said about your notes did not mean that you were not giving me enough details. What I wanted was an explanation of the way those interior graces were given to you. For example, you say that the Holy Spirit reposed in your heart. How? Was it in a way that affected your senses, or did it affect your intellect? What was the state of your soul at the time? What was the effect of the grace in your soul?

You give in too much to sorrow at the thought of losing the help of Father Dupont. This is foolish. The good Master gave you a broken straw as a support of your weakness, for every human support, no matter how holy the person may be, has only the strength of a broken straw; and when He takes him away and gives you His own arm instead, you complain! Try to sanctify the relations which the Jesuit Father wishes you to have with the Polish lady.

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Prepare yourself for a fervent renewal of your vow of chastity on the 23rd of this month. Do not renew any other vow but that. Surrender your soul to Mary, the Mother of fair love, in order that she may help your soul to rest on the Heart of Jesus. I will say Mass on that day for the intention I mentioned above.

(no signature)

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Letter Four

August 9, 1843

Vol. 4, p. 298

J. M. J.

My child :

I am most grateful to Our Lord for the great grace He has given you of freeing you from the greatest danger you have ever encountered. You were suspended by a hair, as it were, over the horrible chasm of hell, but the goodness of Jesus rescued you. Yes, you are truly a child of His mercy since you were saved solely through His great goodness. Be on your guard henceforth, and make a report to Father Pierre on all your actions and your relations with men. I know that the divine Spouse is watching over you and that He will not allow you to be lost, since He has given so many proofs of this. That is why you must place all your confidence in Him; He alone is the one who will save you. You are constantly stepping over precipices and walking carelessly, and hence you very much need His guiding hand and His support. He is always ready to give you that guidance and support. Nevertheless be vigilant and as soon as you are troubled by anything, no matter how vague your feeling of anxiety, go immediately to the good Father or write to me.

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as otherwise you run the risk of being very unfaithful to our good Master.

I confess that I consider it a miracle that you were able to escape from the clutches of the demon who had you almost in his grip. You were unfaithful, my poor child, to have remained in that state of doubt for so long and to have allowed yourself to be led by curiosity. You know very well that it was curiosity that led Eve astray and the whole human race after her. She listened to the demon and though at first she did not accept his views, the enemy crept into her heart little by little and led her astray. You have been more fortunate than Eve, since divine mercy has saved you from being led into error. You realize how great is the love of Jesus for you. Don't be sad now because God allowed you to run so great a risk. On the contrary, rejoice that He is so full of goodness and mercy towards you, and be more faithful still in loving Him as He deserves.

The Jansenists are most dangerous heretics. Don't try to reason out for yourself, my dear child, whether their doctrine is true or not. Be content to know that they are outside the Church of Jesus Christ, and that their doctrine was condemned and anathematized by that same Church. Be a docile child of this dear Church, outside of which no one ever finds Jesus Christ. How could you have had Jesus as your Spouse if you had the misfortune of no longer belonging to Holy Church? You would then have been divorced from that dear Spouse.

I confess, my dear child, that my soul is deeply grieved when I think of the imminent danger that threatened you. Refuse henceforth to receive those dangerous men in your home. They are hell-hounds who come clothed like lambs, intent on leading good and simple souls astray. They are truly ravening wolves, wearing the mask and using the language of piety, but there is not even a shadow of devotion in their hearts.

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St. Paul spoke in similar terms of certain heretics of his time who used the same wiles as our hypocritical Jansenists. They feign great austerity and good morals, but they are full of overweening pride which makes them rebel against everything which is not in agreement with their false ideas. They rise up against the Church and against the one whom Jesus Christ has appointed to rule it in His name. They claim that the whole Church is in error and that they alone possess the truth. This is the height of stubborn pride, and is characteristic of stubborn heretics. They maintain that they are the elect few and that the entire Church of Jesus Christ is lost.

Remember, my dear good soul, that the small number of the elect is not found outside the Church, but that it is precisely for the small number of the elect that the divine Master founded His holy Church, so that they might be saved. Do you think that the Good Shepherd will take into his sheep-fold sheep that are wicked and unworthy of Him and who do not belong to Him, and that He will leave the good sheep outside? The Jansenists in their craftiness tell you that they are in the Church. No one can be in the Church if he refuses to profess the true doctrine which Jesus Christ gave it. Moreover, the Church has rejected them from her bosom and, as long as they remain rebellious, form those coteries and refuse to accept the doctrine of the Church, they cannot be counted among the children of that Church. Anyone who holds that the Church errs when she establishes those devotions does not belong to the Church.

My dear child, love Jesus Christ and His holy Church! Believe only what she believes. These corrupt men tell you that you, like the entire Church, are in error. The Church never errs and neither will you err so long as you believe what she believes. Reject and cast out, then, those enemies of the Church of Jesus Christ, those workers of iniquity, those teachers of lies, and cling with all your soul to Jesus

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and His holy Church. Be ready to die a thousand deaths rather than separate yourself from her, for this would mean eternal death, the suicide of your soul.

Explain everything about your retreat to Father Pierre, and if he tells you to come before the end of that instruction, obey him absolutely and come. You can see the risks one runs when left to one's own counsels. I have made the following arrangements for you. I shall obtain lodging for you in an orphanage, a good and pious house under the direction of good and religious Sisters. They will not make any special arrangements for you, but you will be treated like one of the girls and will sleep in the dormitory with the others. You will go by the name of Miss Jenny and no one will know your true name, Guillarme. I have very serious reasons for this. You will spend your time in silence and peace. After you have returned to Paris, I will send you a letter by Father de Regnier, one of our missionaries, which you will give to the good Father Pierre. In it I shall give him an account of the condition of your soul in so far as heaven will have helped me to know it. I have asked Father de Regnier to venerate the Sacred Tunic in your name. Unite your intentions to his, as he also desires to obtain certain favors. Please arrange for him to be able to say Mass at the altar where the Tunic is kept.

I would like to send you the good German lady at the end of this week or the beginning of next. She finds it difficult to leave her sister. The latter wants her to stay a few days longer, since the affairs of this sister, who is still a Protestant, require that she stay. Please look after her when she comes.

Tell her about the Sacred Heart Convent and the kind of life that is led by the Sisters. Do not tell her that they easily dismiss postulants. I told her that it was your mother who was the cause of your not remaining with them. Glory to Jesus and Mary!

(no signature)

Letter Five

August, 1843

Vol. 4, p. 314

J. M. J.

My dear child:

It seems that the good Lord wants you on the Cross and I am glad that it is so. You will feel that I am abandoning you since it is fifteen days since you wrote and sent on your third copybook and I have not yet answered. This, I hope through the mercy of God, will never happen. I trust that Our Lord will always give me the courage to sustain all souls who are afflicted and need help.

In your first letter you seemed to invite a scolding, and after what you wrote in the second letter, you certainly deserve it. How can you have a perfect love for your divine Spouse, when you have such a great fondness for men? None of your pretexts for being attached to your directors stand up to scrutiny. My dear child, in the name of Our Lord, and in virtue of holy obedience, I forbid you to write even one word to Father L. J., unless you have my sanction beforehand as to the gravity of the reason. I forbid you, henceforth, to give him any order or charge, even with regard to the Sacred Tunic. If he writes to you, do not show the letter to any one but throw it, unopened, into the refuse heap or the fire. This will be part of your penance for not having obeyed my order to rid yourself of the things he sent you. A further penance, in virtue of the same obedience: I forbid you to write to Father Favreux and his Superior. That good Father is doing well and seems to have peace of mind. When I gave your letter to him, he replied: "She will never get an answer from me." So don't expect any answer and do nothing about it.

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If you have trouble in the matter of the vow of which you spoke to me, explain the matter and I shall tell you what to do. Poor soul, stop being a slave of men and be a spouse of Jesus instead. Your heart leads you astray and this is why the good Master, since the time when you first decided to serve Him, has sent you all those trials. He wants your heart for Himself alone, and as long as you are unwilling to give yourself entirely to Him without reservation, He will crush and break you. You are a spouse of Jesus Christ. What would you think of a queen who is tenderly loved by her king, if she were to leave her husband and go and throw herself into the arms of a beggar, a tramp covered with rags and filth, and embrace and kiss him? What an insult to her King and spouse! You are the spouse of the King of Kings. You are but a wretched beggar whom He has taken from the dunghill and made His spouse. We are beggars, and you want to leave your divine Spouse, the King of glory, the most beautiful among the sons of men, and cast yourself into the arms of such vile beggars? Do you think of this, or are you out of your mind? All your mortifications are nothing! All your meditations are insignificant! All your good works are of no value; for they are not *the things* that the divine Spouse asks of you. He wants your heart, your whole heart without reserve.

I laugh at your good works and I don't care what mortifications you practice. I ask only one thing: Give your heart, not to me for I despise it, but to the divine Jesus Himself, for Whom I ask it, and Whom alone I desire, for He is sufficient for me. He wants your heart, He demands it without reserve, and you will not find rest nor have a truly interior life, until you have immolated, sacrificed and annihilated your poor heart.

My dear child, you will say that I am uncompromising. Yes, I am as hard as iron or marble, because I know that

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you cannot expect any rest nor peace until you have sacrificed all your affection for creatures, all your desire to live for them and to find your joy in them. It should be clear to you that this is the reason why your divine Spouse has acted as He has with you. He takes away from you all creatures and leads them to oppose you. Think of the number of directors you have had in your life! I have never read of anyone, living or dead, who changed directors as often as you. Why was that? Because Jesus did not want you to become attached to creatures. I have never met anyone who had suffered more harm from his directors than you have. Why is this? Jesus wanted to show you that you must not attach yourself to a director but must cling to Him alone. I have never seen anyone who has been so completely abandoned by the men with whom he was acquainted and whom he sought to please. Why? Always the same reason, Jesus wants you for Himself alone.

If you do not surrender to Him, you will meet with many other difficulties, even worse than those you have already encountered, because Jesus wants to have you at any cost. He does not abandon you. Oh no, don't be afraid of that. I do not fear that. But He will so overwhelm you interiorly, and will allow the friends of your heart to so ill-treat you, that He will blunt finally that natural affection that draws you to creatures.

You object: "Am I not allowed to have affection for persons who do good to me? There is no sin in that, it is but a natural sentiment of gratitude." Well, Jesus does not want it! It is not fitting for a spouse, for one whom, in order to capture all her love, he has overwhelmed with His favors. He does not want it! I repeat, *He does not want it!* You owe yourself entirely to Him. That is what He wants and that should be enough.

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You say: "But I love those persons for love of Him." I reply: "Is it for love of Him?" He forbids it! He does not want you to have that sensible affection for them for love of Him. He wants you to love Him alone. All your sensible affection must be for Him.

"But this is painful, it hurts, it tears my heart asunder. It is very hard not to be able to yield to these sensible affections, and to reserve all for Jesus alone." Well, it is necessary that you be overwhelmed and that there be no one but Jesus to console you, and that you find no consolation in creatures, nor attach yourself to them by sensible affection.

"But your words will plunge me into desolation and your reproaches will crush my heart." Yes, I seem to extinguish a candle that is already half dead in that I overwhelm a heart already suffering intensely because so many have abandoned it. But the contrary is true. I am giving you a solid, earnest direction that will rescue you from your desolation and fix you in Jesus alone. In Him alone are your support, your love, your consolation, your life and your all.

Do not think that I am angry with you and that I hate you. The charity of Jesus Christ is in my heart. In the relations which the good Master permitted I should have with your soul, I value only one thing and have only one desire, namely, to help you so that you may be able to present yourself to the divine Master as a pure and stainless virgin, one who is worthy to be His holy spouse and to enjoy divine union with Him.

You see the weakness that results from the natural affection of your heart. I feel obliged to make excuses lest you become discouraged. Strengthen your heart. It will be strong only when Jesus, your divine Spouse is its one, peaceful guest. But as long as He is not the sole peaceful owner of that small tabernacle, as long as He has not changed that tabernacle of clay into one of gold and diamonds, you will

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be miserable and will falter. Keep peace in your soul, then; be faithful and place your trust in Jesus, your divine Spouse. It is up to Him to make the law for His own house. You do not belong to yourself but to Jesus and hence, as Sovereign, He may order things to be done as He wills. That is exactly what He is doing, and you must, like a timid and affectionate spouse, act according to His orders and His will. What He wills He wills through love.

Why is He jealous and wish to possess even the smallest part of the affection of your heart? Because He has a special predilection for your soul. Allow Him then to have peaceful possession of your soul, and to be united with your soul to the full extent of His divine love for you. Do not grieve that dear Spouse. He does not deserve such treatment. On the contrary, He deserves all your love and all the sensible affections of your heart. When you have succeeded in restoring peace once more to your soul, do not fear to cast yourself into the arms of your divine Spouse. Approach Him with confidence, since this is what He expects from you.

Let me know on what days you would find it most convenient to get away. I want you to come soon and make a retreat here, so that you may find rest in God, and if it be His holy will, that I may be able to examine your condition thoroughly. Come as soon as possible and don't be afraid that you might neglect something else by coming. The good Lord will know how to make up for anything that might be neglected because of your coming here. Reply as soon as you can, for I want to arrange things here so that they may be able to receive you. Here, again, the Master requires sacrifices, sacrifices of the heart, from you. You will not make your retreat at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, but at a poor, though edifying, religious house. Further, you will not even pay a visit to the Sacred Heart Convent, nor will they know that you are here. Neither will you visit Father

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Favreux, nor let him know that you are here. Do not tell anyone, not even the Religious of the Sacred Heart in Paris, where you are going or what you intend to do. Be obedient, my child, and Jesus will sanctify you. But if you follow the dictates of your heart, you will not please Him.

Do not continue to write your copybooks (diary) since you say that this gives you headaches. I know enough about that matter, for I have seen the account of your entrance into the Sacred Heart Congregation, and your departure from there. You can tell me the rest orally during the retreat. I am very anxious that you should make this retreat, for without it I should find it very difficult to direct you. Do not decide on a permanent confessor before the retreat. I will help you to choose one later on.

If you have filled a copybook in the meantime, you can send it to me. If not, then, as I said above, do not write any more.

My poor Protestant lady has become a convert and she is in the very best of dispositions. If the good Lord had asked me to choose the dispositions I would like to see in her, I could not improve on those she manifests at present. I think that all her affairs will be in order at the end of next week and she will come then. Tell Mrs. de Gramont that, and if you think I ought myself to write to her, please let me know. I thought it was necessary to write in advance to let her know that the lady was coming, and I was going to give her a letter to take by hand to Mrs. de Gramont. Let me know what I ought to do.

(no signature)

P.S. I almost forgot a very important thing. I am absolutely opposed to your spending your own money to buy the house in Argenteuil. In the name of holy obedience, I forbid you to invest one penny of your money in it. Pray to the

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good Lord that He may send you a wealthy person to found the house, but do not buy the property with your own money. I am quite satisfied with your decision of forgetting about the Benedictines for the moment. The ones of whom you spoke do not seem to be very edifying religious. If we cannot find good and fervent ones, it is better not to have any religious at all. You are wise in not taking any steps for establishing the Benedictines until you know what the Bishop of Versailles thinks about it. The same applies to the religious Sisters.

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Letter Six

September, 1843

Vol. 4, p. 331

My child:

I have not the time to write a long letter as our good German girl is leaving and she will bring this letter to you. I ask you for the love of Jesus and Mary to take good care of her. She is a very good person who loves the good Lord with all her heart. Her dispositions are astonishing for one who was converted so recently. Grace is working visibly in her, and you must try to keep alive those good dispositions. If possible direct her to the nice things in Paris, at least to the holy things, such as Notre Dame, Invalides, Our Lady of Victories, etc. Please introduce her to Mrs. de Gramont.

Come then, while Father Dupont is here, and make your retreat. Don't be afraid that you will be put with the children. It had already been arranged that you should have a room, even before Father de Regnier spoke to me about it. I must be a horrible monster, seeing that all good souls are afraid of me, even though I am not conscious of having harmed anybody. When I pay a visit to the orphanage the children

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run away as soon as they see me. It is only in the confessional that they want to talk to me, and they come there with joy because the good Lord leads them . . . It seems to me that you are a child like them and that you are afraid of me. If you wish I will see you only in the confessional, and I will not frighten you there. I am convinced that you will be very happy after your retreat. Your conscience will be clear and you will, perhaps, return gradually to a sound method of mental prayer.

Thank you sincerely for all that you did for Father de Regnier and for your prayers at the shrine of the Holy Tunic. God alone must be your portion, and Mary, your Mother, should be your model in the art of loving Jesus, and your protection against your enemies.

A Rule for Your Daily Life

Jesus, Mary, Joseph

Appendix

- 5:30 Rising
- 6:30 Mental Prayer in your home
- 7:30 Little Hours, Holy Mass, Thanksgiving, Breakfast.
- 9:30 From time to time in the course of your morning occupations, take a little rest in the depths of your soul near Our Lord.

When you are not too busy in the morning at home, make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady. If you cannot do this then make aspirations to the Blessed Sacrament.

Whenever you pass a Church, enter and make a visit to Our Lord. If you cannot do this then adore Him as you pass.

Whenever you have the time in the morning, read part of the New Testament.

- 12:00 Lunch. Afternoon same as morning.

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- 3:00 Vespers and Compline
9:00—10:00 Exercises of piety, reading, and anything you
might have omitted during the day.
10:00 Bed

Rule for Your Retreat

- 5:30 Rising. Fix up your room. Rest in God.
6:00 Mental Prayer
7:00 Holy Mass. Rest in God
8:00 Breakfast
8:15 Life of a Saint
8:45 Little Hours. Rest
9:15 Spiritual Catechism
9:45 Five decades of Beads
10:00 Mental Prayer
10:45 Rest
11:00 Spiritual Catechism
11:30 Rest
11:45 Visit to the Blessed Virgin. Examen. Life of a Saint.
Lunch. Recreation.
2:00 Visit to Our Lord.
2:30 Vespers and Compline. Rest
3:00 Beads. Life of a Saint. Rest
4:15 Third Mental Prayer. Rest
4:45 Beads. Rest
5:00 Catechism. Rest
6:00 Fourth Mental Prayer. Rest
7:00 Matins and Lauds. Life of a Saint.
8:00 Supper. Recreation. Prayers.
9:30 Bed

*Letter Seven**September 21, 1843**Vol. 4, p. 341*

My dear child :

You have just left here and now I am asking you to do a good turn. I need your help very badly, and perhaps the good Lord will make use of you to render this small service which will be very pleasing to Him. It concerns one of the children of the orphanage of whom you once spoke very highly. It is the girl who brought you your dinner once or twice, and who seemed to interest you since she was so unassuming. Her name is Clemence Godrand (I don't know if you already knew that) and she needs your charitable help, or rather, it is Our Lord who pleads with you on her behalf. You are probably wondering at this elaborate introduction. There is nothing really extraordinary in the case, but I am keenly interested in the spiritual good of that child, and if Our Lord does not send help now, she will be in danger later on. Here is the situation.

This eighteen year old child is truly good and pious. For a long time she has wanted to enter a convent. I can tell you in confidence that, in one of her fervent moments, she even made a vow of chastity without consulting any one. I am able to tell you this since I know that she would approve. She is gentle, good, and docile, but since she is an illegitimate child, it is difficult to find a convent that is suitable for her.

Convents in which the Rule is well observed are usually not in need of vocations and hence they refuse to accept her. We find it impossible, therefore, to find a place for her except in a convent that is lax. Now I should prefer to leave her at the orphanage than to send her to a lax convent. To make things worse, the mother of this poor child follows her and wants to have her so that she may cause her ruin. She in-

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tends to come to Amiens and she has threatened several times to take the girl away. This would mean the child's ruin. If the mother should succeed this would be the worst thing that could happen to Clemence. Once already I snatched her from the clutches of the mother and sent her to a convent near Amiens where she was received as a religious. But this convent is on the downgrade and will be soon disbanded. Clemence has come back to the orphanage and her mother now wants her to return and stay for some time in Amiens. Clemence could not resist her mother's claims, since she has not yet reached her majority. Father de Brandt spoke to the Superior of the Sacred Heart Convent and they agreed to take her for a retreat of fifteen days in their convent. In the meantime I wrote to Mother Barrat to ask if she would take her as a lay sister but she refused. Besides, although Clemence found these ladies to be very good and pious she did not feel drawn to the Sacred Heart Congregation because they were socially above her and their life was too mild. She was too comfortable in their house and she received no spiritual direction there. The reasons she gave me for not wishing to enter there showed her good dispositions and were a source of joy to me. She does not know that they had refused to accept her. But although her good dispositions are a source of joy to me, this does not get me out of the awkward situation. I can't put her back in the orphanage for she would be there under false pretences; she would suffer much and be exposed to temptations which are known to me.

I feel inclined to put her with our "Negresses" (I mean those who will work for the Negro). I have not mentioned this to her but divine Providence seems to be directing her to that work. She told me a strange thing yesterday that seems to confirm my opinion. About eight months ago she was suffering from discouragement and interior desolation because she thought that she would never be able to become a religious Sister. I told her to have confidence in God, and

LETTERS TO JENNY GUILLARME

among other things said that: "If it be necessary to build a convent just for you, Our Lord is so good that He will do it." Now, this week, at the time when she felt that she would not like to join the Sacred Heart nuns, she eagerly begged Our Lord to do what He willed with her, and she heard an interior voice telling her: "Father Libermann will form a community, and it is there that you must enter." She was ashamed of that thought and that voice, since they reminded her of what I had told her eight months before. She continued to pray during the following days, and then heard the same voice once more. She decided not to speak to me about it because she was ashamed, but she remained anxious and troubled until she resolved to tell me. She came to tell me the story and I treated it as childishness, but I kept it in mind and now tell you of it in strict confidence, in the hope that you will take an interest in the child.

I ask you, therefore, to help in finding some place where I can send her in the meantime. If, later on, she feels attracted to some other convent, she can always apply for admission, but otherwise we shall consider that her decision is dictated by God's will. If you are unable to find a convent for her, could you put her up for a few days? You could put a mattress on the floor and give her something that would serve as a pillow. She would be satisfied with that as she is accustomed to living the hard way. However, I do not wish to impose any obligation on you to do this, but simply to appeal to your charity. This is urgent. She cannot stay at the Sacred Heart Convent after next Saturday week.

Entirely yours in the charity of Jesus and Mary,

Francis Libermann

On October 18, 1843, Father Libermann wrote to Miss Guillarme: "Clemence has been placed in the convent of the

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Ladies of Louvencourt and they are very pleased with her. I do not want her to come to Paris for the present."

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Letter Eight September 25, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 351

J. M. J.

My child:

I am about to ask you, in the name of Our Lord, to render Him a service, and no matter what you say, you will have to do it. The poor German girl has left the Convent of the Sacred Heart and she is in a state of despair. We must follow that poor sheep. In all probability her pride is causing ravages in her poor soul that is torn to shreds by sorrow, and you must do your best to stop this evil. Try to help her and do your best to find a good place that will be suitable for her. She is walking on the brink of a precipice and despair may drive her far. Her present address is: c/o Mrs. Simonin, Rue des Postes, 21. We must not delay: go and console her in the name of Our Lord!

I shall reply soon to your last letter brought to me by Father Duquesnay.

Your poor servant in Jesus and Mary,

(no signature)

P. S. Remember that you are visiting a person who is not perfect. You are being asked to bear a burden, so don't be cowardly or squeamish. How can you expect Our Lord to carry the burdens of others, if you yourself refuse to do so? Miserable creatures that we are, we like others to support

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us but we don't want to support others when they are miserable. Take care, my dear child, not to be repelled by the unpleasant character, the imperfections, the pride, the violence of these poor, weak, sinful souls. If you wish to be a true spouse of Jesus, you must be willing to share everything with Jesus, even the pains and anguish of others.

Never forget that once you were disgusting in the sight of Jesus and yet He bore with you, and did so lovingly. Remember the time when you suffered and committed faults, when everyone rebuffed you; you were glad to find someone to console you. Those who rebuffed you considered more their own disgust with you than they did the pain you suffered.

You, on the contrary, must put yourself in the place of the poor people who suffer, and try to appreciate more what they suffer than the things that revolt you in their character. Do not reason about them or judge them, don't say that they are wrong, or that they are full of faults. At a time when a soul is unhappy we must be on our guard not to condemn her in our own mind. Our tender compassion for her should soften our hard and narrow heart, curb our impatience, arouse our desire to support her, and blot out from our mind the unfavorable impression her unpleasant manners, her sadness and her agitation made on it.

Do you wish to be a more faithful handmaid? Do you want to participate more perfectly in the love of Jesus? If you do, then you must have a zeal and love for souls, especially for those who are unfortunate and are a burden to you. That zealous love surpasses all other affection and makes us forget all annoyance and disgust.

Letter Nine

No date

Vol. 4, p. 374

J. M. J.

My dear child:

You are probably suffering because I have left you so long without a reply. I had almost finished my letter but I did not send it, because in it I was taking you to task. It occurred to me that, on account of your weakness and sensitiveness, Our Lord wished me to be more considerate. You will be more or less a child until you gain control over your sensitiveness, and children ought to be treated gently.

In my letter I was finding fault with you for several reasons. Firstly, because you have allowed yourself to be carried away by natural affection and have not adhered with sufficient love to your divine Spouse who wants all your affection. Be pure and holy, my dear child. Let your joy be in the voice, the look, the embrace and outpourings of your heavenly Spouse. Forget about the friend of the Spouse. He must not attract your tender affection and favors to himself, for these must be given entirely to your heavenly Bridegroom.

Secondly, you have formed a judgement on Clemence far too quickly. You have only seen this child once or twice and you think that you know her better than I who have been her confessor for a whole year. Do you think that I did not already know the things you said about her that were true? Don't be too hasty in forming a judgement about people. You know well how you are often upset when people judge you hastily. They see only evil, and often even take as evil what is good because they see imperfectly. Judge not and you shall not be judged. You should have learned from what you yourself experienced not to judge others easily. When I get new

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novices, I hardly dare to make a definite judgement about them after three weeks; and you, child though you be, foolishly judge at first sight. Now see the consequences of this rash judgement. You do not want to have anything to do with that poor child. Well, the good Lord has helped me to find a home for her elsewhere.

With regard to my founding a community of religious Sisters, I will tell you, my dear child, exactly how I feel about that. The very thought of founding such a community frightens me and I will do so only if and when Our good Master obliges me to do so. Let me not hear any more, therefore, from you about this; try to give yourself entirely to Our Lord and our most holy Mother.

Don't be childish in the matter of your faith. Be strong and live by the life of Jesus who is in you and wants to be the one and only master of your soul. Be docile and flexible in His hands, so that your life may be your own no longer but may be that of Jesus who lives in you.

In the midst of your many occupations, always have your moments when you can withdraw into the small sanctuary of Jesus in the depths of your soul where He rests. Kiss the wounds of His hands and feet and sacred side. Look at Him with sweetness and affection, surrender your soul to Him, and remain for some moments resting quietly on His breast.

I leave you there. When you are there all is well!

I should have written at greater length but that I have to hurry. I am overwhelmed with work and still feel very ill. Our good Mother will help me to do everything, and Jesus will enable me to do all that is necessary. May His holy love increase in your soul, may it fill and envelop it.

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Letter Ten

October 18, 1843

Vol. 4, p. 407

My dear child :

I am sorry that my delay in answering your letter has caused you to suffer, but it was not really my fault. It is God's will that we must suffer such annoyances, but you should keep your soul in peace. Try to live always in humble and loving submission to God's will. Remain prostrate before Him every time He sends you a cross, or afflicts you in any way whatsoever.

Clemence has been placed in the convent of the Ladies of Louvencourt. She acts as portress and helps out in the convent; the Sisters are very pleased with her. No, my dear child, I am not insisting on Clemence going to Paris, far from it. It was only that I did not know what to do with the poor child that caused me to mention it. You made a bit of a mess of this affair, but what does it matter now? This will not be your last mistake. When you have committed a fault you should humble yourself and then peacefully forget about it. Yes, I agree that you were very severe, you who need so much indulgence and who have to be treated with so much tact. Learn once for all to live by and through the love of Jesus Who dwells in your soul. Christ's love is gentle and patient, and it is not jealous. It is not anxious to find the evil or defective thing. One who is animated by Christ's love readily believes good of her neighbor. She confidently expects everything from him and rejoices in the good she sees in him.

You have not acted contrary to Christ's way of acting in all things, but only in certain respects. You will need long, intimate, peaceful union with Him before you can attain the holy perfection of charity. Until such time as you will have

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gained perfect command over your senses you will have your moments of failure. Be docile and repose sweetly and humbly on the Heart of Jesus who is in you, and bit by bit your soul will become docile, and you will get control over your passing emotions and imaginings.

Don't torment yourself by thinking about the sorrow I may have felt on account of what you said, or did not say. It will cause me sorrow when you commit faults but it is not this that should occupy your mind. Think of your divine Spouse to Whom those faults are of much more concern than they are to me. Speaking humanly, one might often say that this great Lord must feel ashamed of having so poor a spouse. But the opposite is true, for He receives glory from the angels and saints, not because of the riches and beauty He sees in your soul, but because of the immense goodness and kindness with which He treats you.

I cannot remember when I used the words, "servant only", but I do not think that I had anything in particular in mind when I used them. Things will continue as they were when you left Amiens. However, all your love and affection should be directed towards Jesus, your divine Spouse. Creatures are but rotten worms and wretched servants of our admirable Master, and you must refuse absolutely to be attached to them in any way.

I trust that through God's mercy I shall never have a community of Sisters under me. This is my great desire. I have already enough trouble taking care of myself as God wants me to do. Pray fervently to Our Lord that He may fulfil His will and may sacrifice this poor servant.

I have already spoken to you about what you suffered from those men at Argenteuil. Consider yourself blessed to be treated like your divine Spouse. Let your intention be pure in all you do. Those blows are necessary to purify you more and more. What you suffered at Argenteuil may well

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be one of the greatest favors God has bestowed on you. His goodness and tender love for your soul are shown by such afflictions. Hand yourself over to Him that He may crucify you as much as He pleases. May His Holy Name be blest, praised and adored! May you be despised, ill-treated and rejected by all men. Oh, how much I desire this, that your heart may once for all belong entirely and forever to Jesus.

It is hard to believe that an insignificant thing like that of the newspaper could have so aroused the anger of these men at Argenteuil. It is probably the fact that the Benedictines have established a house there that has annoyed them. You will meet great difficulties from now on. If the works of God are not done in secret they succeed only with difficulty. Our Lord hid Himself for thirty years. Even during His public life and preaching He hid His divinity, and even hid from many the manner in which He would accomplish our Redemption.

It is thus we must always remain hidden if we wish to do something for the glory of the Master. When we make known our plans beforehand, we nearly always fail. Do not give up the project on behalf of the Benedictines because of the opposition. The men at Argenteuil will get over it I hope. Place all your confidence in God and not in men.

I am leaving this letter unfinished as I have just got news that obliges me to leave for Paris this evening. You could come to see me on Thursday morning at my lodgings.

May Jesus be your only love.

(no signature)

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Letter Eleven

November 17, 1843

Vol. 4, p. 431

J. M. J.

My very dear child:

Would you please give the enclosed letter to Father Jerome and ask him to address it and post it to Father Pierre. I myself did not know the address. I did not have time to send this holy Father instructions about a matter that had to be seen to in Rome. Tell Father Jerome that the letter has to do with a Negro girl about whom he once spoke to me. I had completely forgotten who it was that had spoken to me about her and was therefore unable to reply. That is why I did not mention the matter to good Father Pierre. Tell him that my answer is in the affirmative and that I want the child.

I don't know what happened about the good person you know so well and who was expected to come to the Orphanage. I wrote to you the day I returned and have not got any further news about it since.

How are you yourself? Are you still nailed to the Cross? If so, so much the better. Remain there with Jesus, for there is nothing in all the world that will more surely sanctify you than the cross, and particularly the one you were carrying when I saw you in Paris.

Humble yourself under God's hand, subject yourself peacefully to Him. Allow Him to do what He pleases with you, and let Him deprive you of everything that might still give you satisfaction in this world, and make you an object of contempt in your own eyes and in the eyes of the world. In the midst of all these afflictions remain in the presence of Jesus Who is your only love, your Spouse, your All. Let Him strike and cut and wound you so that the old man that

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is still in you may die. We know that we must die in order that we may rise again some day. So too must we die to nature so that we may rise to the life of Jesus in our soul. We know that dying involves great suffering. So also is it necessary to suffer much if we wish to die to our nature. This death to nature is sometimes preceded by great torments and dreadful agony. Suffer with peace, confidence, meekness, submission, humility and love. Jesus is with you, Jesus belongs to you, Jesus is in you. Place yourself in the arms of Mary and remain there.

(no signature)

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Letter Twelve

Vol. 4, p. 455

La Neuville, December 11, 1843

J. M. J.

My dear sister :

I apologize for having made you wait for a reply to your letter. That letter gave me great joy for it showed me that Our Lord is gradually purifying your heart and detaching it from creatures. Your pains and privations are thus bearing fruit. Divine goodness will give you solid virtue by and by. To be truly virtuous you must be completely detached from self and from all things, and completely abandoned in humility and peace into the hands of Jesus, your divine Spouse. True virtue does not consist in those natural feelings of love, and tender affections.

I do not mean by this that we should despise such natural feelings, but that solid devotion does not depend on them.

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For you those natural affections are even a danger, since they render your relations with Our Lord imperfect. That is why the divine Spouse restores the balance by allowing you to experience spiritual dryness and even a certain amount of pain. These are more precious than gold for you. Submit to the good pleasure of Jesus and remain always humble, peaceful, confident, meek, and recollected.

Now that you are gradually becoming detached from creatures, you still need to learn to detach yourself from self, since, from now on, the more you detach yourself from those around you and with whom you come in contact, the more will you incline towards yourself. You will be attached to self, will love self, and will cling tenaciously to the things that appeal to your tastes and ideas. Purify yourself more and more from all attachments, tastes, desires and affections that are not directly aimed at Jesus. You will do this if your interior life is characterized by meekness, humility, peace and calm. Our Lord will help you if you accustom yourself to live in holy union with Him in all that you do.

Turn in love also very often to Mary. Look on yourself as her child and have recourse to her in the troubles, temptations and embarrassments that come from without, and in your interior anguish. Speak to her about your joys and your pleasures, not in lengthy speeches, but, glancing at her with gentleness and love, use from time to time some word of affection.

I sent on Mr. Buisson's trunk, but I have not yet received the hundred francs, which would come in very useful. It seems that the poor child continues to live in a state of uncertainty in the midst of Babylon. Ask Mary to take care of this most unhappy soul.

I have ceased for quite some time to count upon the person you mentioned, not that I did ever count very much on her. I don't know what you have found out about that good

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person, but I take the occasion to tell you that you should not easily believe the evil that is spoken about others. Never believe what is founded on nothing but suggestions, conjectures or even probabilities. Only believe the evil when the fact is evident and you cannot deny it, but then believe only what is evident and nothing more. Do not think any further on these things unless you are obliged to do so. When you must consider these things, do not yield to displeasure, coldness or disgust with the people concerned, and do not let your feelings lead you to despise or ignore them, but rather let your heart be filled with charity for them. Remain at peace and, no matter what evil they may have done either to yourself or those dear to you, try to be favorably disposed to them.

Even when you act thus, you will often fail in charity by judging your neighbor too severely. You will probably say that I exaggerate in what I say. Well, in my own case it is perfectly true as I know from experience. I hope that God, in His divine mercy, may pardon my faults, as I detest them with all the sincerity of my heart.

Still, I want to give you a further bit of advice. Although you must be always gentle and charitable of heart and not indulge in judging your neighbor unfavorably, still, at the same time, when you do see something evil, or have solid grounds for suspecting such evil, you must be prudent. At such times be watchful lest your too great trustfulness and credulity allow harm to result to yourself or others. But while being on your guard against such people, do not, however, entertain feelings of harshness and lack of sympathy towards them. Do not be stiff and forbidding but let your heart be filled with a real, tender, sincere, love, a love in which there is no bitterness. Act like those physicians who have to come close to patients who are suffering from a contagious disease. They, while being full of attention for

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the sick, take the necessary precautions to avoid becoming contaminated.

Sometimes, as in the case of Jansenists, you should flee from the person who might cause you harm. But it must be for reasons of prudence that you flee from them and not because they disgust you or cause you pain. In this way we shall unite the prudence of the serpent with the simplicity of the dove.

I do not think that you were at fault on that particular occasion with regard to what you told me about the person in question. But I use the occasion to warn you, because I feel that in this matter you are somewhat wanting. I also warn you to watch over your heart so that, in the case of the men at Argenteuil, you should not be glad to hear of the trouble they are in, and that you should not take satisfaction from knowing that their number has decreased since the time they launched their attacks on you. God has a right to punish them, but it is not for you to take satisfaction from that. I am not saying that you have, in fact, taken satisfaction from their discomfiture, but I wish to warn you not to do so because I want your soul to be wholly pure and holy before God.

You did not mention whether you sent my letter to Father Pierre in Rome. Send it to him immediately and do not wait until he returns. Do I not owe you some money?

(no signature)

P.S. I am sending you a letter for Miss Reck. Don't bring it to her yourself and don't let her know through whom it was sent. Post it immediately as it is urgent.

Letter Thirteen

January 23, 1844

Vol. 6, p. 19

My dear child :

Father Schwindenhammer forgot to give me the letters which he got for me in Paris, and yours was one of them. I received it only yesterday.

Don't worry about my health ; I am doing very well. Frequent and sometimes tiresome journeys over muddy roads keep me alive and do me much good. The remedy is a little severe for a lazy fellow who would like to remain always in his shell, but what can we do ? We must not neglect our poor body ; if it suffers a little, so much the better. It must contribute something in return for all that we do for it. The bottle which Father Tisserant gave me has done my stomach much good. For quite a while I was content just to look at it, and this was already something. We should proceed slowly when we have to take medicine. Later on I took some of it whenever I felt discomfort and when it was finished I got rid of the bottle. Does that satisfy you ?

I would not like to be always stationed in the same place as you, for you would torment me too much with regard to the care of this poor body. Don't you know that when you plead its cause you are acting on behalf of the devil ? If we gave the body all it asks, it would become very troublesome and proud. It is good that it should be ill at ease from time to time, for this will make it a little less demanding. Nevertheless, I can assure you that, apart from attacks of migraine, I am feeling very well, and even for the migraine I have a remedy which I take. All this will put your mind at ease.

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I think that you are right in your suggestions about the extension to our house. I was of the same opinion myself and things are already arranged. The architect is coming to-morrow with a more detailed plan. We will first complete part of the plan and will finish it according as our needs require and our resources allow. We must be sparing in the manner in which we go ahead, since before we put up beautiful buildings, we must be sure that we have enough money for bread and potatoes.

I shall follow what you suggested and pray for guidance as to whether we should build at La Neuville or not. I do not think that this is an unhealthy place. We have been here now for three winters and no one but myself has been ill, and my illness is due to my delicate constitution and not to the climate. The only thing which would prevent me from building at La Neuville is that divine Providence might want to direct us to Paris. Since, at the moment, I do not see any opening in that direction, I cannot leave the house as it is, as we have not enough room and have no chapel. Besides, the house will never go to loss.

Our plan to gather here young Negroes so as to form and instruct them (as Father Schwindenhammer has probably told you) will always require a suitable house and garden. Only God knows what He wishes to do with us. I wish for nothing. My projects resemble the progress of a blind man. I am ready for anything divine goodness wishes of me, ready to remain in my uselessness and in the disregard in which I deserve to remain, but ready also to go forward as if I did something. I personally will never take the initiative. Pray that the divine will may be accomplished and that I may never put myself forward, but also that my cowardice may not hold me back when Divine Mercy asks painful things of me and things beyond my strength and

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ability. Keep this matter secret. A work that is made known before the proper time is often doomed to failure.

I know the Convent of the Adoration in Rome. I used to go there almost every evening for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. They have Benediction there every day and it is most edifying.

I was delighted with the way you acted towards the Jansenist. Be faithful, my dear child. Be strong in faith and in your loyalty to the divine Spouse. Don't worry too much about the health of people. Monsieur Dupont will not die before the time appointed by God. I don't think that he is at present practicing extraordinary mortifications. A retired and cloistered life and his present function do not suit him at the moment, since his character is not yet formed, but that will come. I know that Our Lord has given him great graces but I do not know the nature of these graces. I hope that these graces will not lie dormant in his soul.

I see from your letter that you are now less talkative and more reserved. This gives me great joy. Be reserved, calm, peaceful, humble and abandoned to the divine Spouse. Do not indulge in self-love, do not esteem yourself nor seek the esteem of others, but be modest, meek, and retiring. When you suffer or when you meet difficulties place them like precious stones in the depths of your soul. Plant there the Cross of Jesus. In the atmosphere of a love, a generosity of heart, and a devotedness that are founded on humility, self-forgetfulness, and renunciation of your own satisfaction, this Tree of Life will grow.

Jesus and Jesus alone must live in your soul, and He must live there on His most holy Cross. Be crucified with Him on that holy Cross.

May peace fill your soul.

(no signature)

LETTERS TO JENNY GUILLARME

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Letter Fourteen

Vol. 6, p. 363

La Neuville, September 23, 1844

J. M. J.

My dear child :

Divine Providence so arranged it that I have not yet replied to your two nice letters.

I have just read an article about you in the "*Univers*", and I am glad that I had not written before this, since I now have an opportunity to speak to you about that article. The article is favorable to you throughout and I am afraid that it might tempt you to vainglory. I would rather that you be criticized than praised. Watch yourself well, my dear child, lest the enemy find you unprepared for his wiles.

I feel quite certain that you realize in the depths of your heart that you are not deserving of praise for all that you have tried to do for the love of your divine Spouse and for His glory. You know what a great honor and joy it is for you to have been able, by means of the remarkable relic which divine Providence deigned to make known through you, one of His poorest and most unworthy servants, to spread a most fervent devotion towards the divine Master. You are convinced that you did not merit that heavenly favor and that it was purely through His goodness that you were chosen as His unworthy and useless instrument. I know that you are conscious of your unworthiness and uselessness. You realize that you have been very unfaithful in the work entrusted to you by divine goodness, and that all the success is simply the result of God's mercy on the souls which He desired to sanctify by that means. However, my dear child, this knowledge and conviction you have of your poverty, weakness and uselessness are not enough to safeguard you against the

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

danger that lies hidden under the words of praise which, in order to further the glory of God and the salvation of souls, the good journalist uses about you.

You know that you are nothing, that you are worthless and incapable of doing anything worthwhile, and that all the good that you find in yourself comes from God and belongs to Him alone, as do the good results of your good work. Still, some feelings of self-complacency, some satisfaction at the thought that God chose you in preference to others, might creep into your heart. You might be tempted to feel satisfied that men have at last acknowledged your contribution, that they esteem you, and are pleased with your sentiments of piety and your work. How great then the danger and how easily evil suggestions could slip into your heart.

Hide yourself from men and from yourself. Don't assume an air of humility before others, but be humble in the depths of your soul. Prostrate yourself before the divine Jesus as would a poor beggar covered with rags who dares to appear before His majesty and work in His divine service. Acknowledge that you are unworthy to live in His holy presence. Nevertheless, while thus abasing yourself, you must retain great peace in your soul, and have a great love for the Beloved of your soul Who allows you to lie prostrate at His feet and accepts you as His poor and feeble servant, but also as His dear child and beloved spouse.

Oh, how unworthy you are and how much I desire to make you realize fully that unworthiness. I want you, at the same time, to have great peace and love, perfect and humble confidence, and abandonment into the arms of your Well-beloved. Ask Him, and ask Mary your good Mother to give you the grace of keeping always in mind that you are wretched, that you are nothing. Ask them that your attitude be one of love for and abandonment to the divine Master, and that they give you a desire to be forgotten, ignored, neglected and

LETTERS TO JENNY GUILLARME

despised and ill-treated by men. To be thus treated by men is more precious than to earn their praises and affection. The contempt of men closes the gates of your soul, and holds therein all the treasures of divine grace which the divine Savior wishes to pour into it. The praise of men and their esteem for you open all the doors of your soul and the few graces that you have are in danger of running out. But when men persecute, ignore and despise you, you will receive treasures of grace in great abundance. When they love and praise you, your graces will be few and of little value.

I have no news for you about the young person in whom you have taken a charitable interest. I wrote to her a few days ago but have not got an answer. I again recommend her to your charity and ask you to continue to take an interest in her. I feel sure that she will be a consolation to you and it will be a very good work to help such a soul who is so good.

I received a letter, I think at the beginning of August, from the good person whom Father de Regnier met some time ago; it is dated 29 July. I have not answered it since she did not give any address, nor did she even sign her name. She must feel hurt that she did not get an answer, so would you please offer her my apology. Only that Father de Regnier had spoken to me about her, I should not have known even what part of the country she comes from, since she marks her letter "City of Mary." This soul is devout and good but she needs consolation.

I leave you to Jesus and Mary, and am in their holy charity,

Your most devoted servant,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Letter Fifteen La Neuville, March 29, 1845 Vol. 7, p. 102

J. M. J.

My child:

I am now able to give you some news. The Trappist brother whom Father Jerome sent to us is doing well. We are pleased with him and if he continues as he has begun he will soon acquire the spirit of our Congregation and will be able to render service for the glory of God.

You may always write to me and explain all that you have on your conscience, and ask all the advice which you consider useful for your soul. No one opens or sees my letters, especially letters of direction. I sometimes show letters regarding the administration to others, but I always open them myself.

It is fortunate that you have many external activities. A retired life and one solely occupied with mental prayer would not suit you, and therefore always accept, with peace and love, whatever divine Providence sends you. All that God does is done well. He knows better than anyone else what you need and He will give it to you. May His Holy Name be blest!

You need activity but you must at the same time remain recollected interiorly, but this without strain. Do all things calmly and, while remaining humbly at the feet of Our Lord Jesus Christ, serve Him peacefully through helping those who seek your aid. You have a natural aptitude for an active life and it is necessary that you keep yourself occupied, but you should try to do things calmly. When you notice that you have allowed yourself to be carried away by external activity, do not be angry with yourself. Humble yourself in

LETTERS TO JENNY GUILLARME

the presence of God and quietly restore calm in your soul and peace before God.

I am not surprised that you have crosses. The one of Argenteuil will be with you as long as you live, or at least as long as you are connected with the devotion to the Sacred Tunic.

I was not aware that you expected to inherit a fortune. For yourself personally it would be better if you possessed nothing, but this does not apply in the case of the works of charity you have undertaken. I am sure that if Divine Providence gives you wealth, you will use it for the glory of the divine Master.

May the peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ and His holy Mother be with you and may divine love fill your soul.

Your most humble servant in Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Priest of the Holy Heart
of Mary

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Letter Sixteen Feast of St. Bartholomew Vol. 7, p. 278
August 24, 1845

J. M. J.

My dear sister:

I let you down during my last journey. I sent you word that I was in Paris and asked you to come and see me, and when you came I was absent. I found your letter at my door and had to leave that same evening and had no time to see you before I departed. Since I had arranged to return very

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

soon I did not send you an excuse, but I have been delayed longer than I expected, and you had to wait until Wednesday. However, I know that you will not hold this against me and will be kind enough to come to see me at 7:00 A.M., on either Monday or Tuesday. I will appreciate it greatly if you do this.

Further, by coming you will be doing an act of charity to a sick man for I am a little indisposed. It is possible that you will have an opportunity of doing an even greater act of charity, for, seeing me you will have compassion on a poor sinner and will pray the good Master not to let my soul perish with the wicked and my life with men of blood, as we read in the Psalm. This I have always deserved and even more so now on account of my unprofitableness and constant infidelity.

Finally, I shall pray that you may do God's will with regard to the thing which, according to your letter, you wish to discuss with me.

In the meantime, I remain in Jesus and Mary,

Your wholly devoted servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

LETTERS TO MISS SAINTE-BÉCEL

VIII. LETTERS TO MISS SAINTE-BÉCEL

Miss Sainte-Bécel of Nantes was a devout lady who engaged in Catholic Action long before such work became known under this title. She had the spirit of a Christian Apostle and while remaining in her own country, did all she could to help the work of the missions. Father Libermann recalled in a letter to Mrs. Bresdon (February 1843) that it was his confrere "Father Saint-Albin who had spoken particularly about Miss Bresdon and Miss Bécel, and had given him a touching description of their charity." Father Libermann gave her the benefit of his special spiritual direction.

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Letter One

La Neuville

Vol. 4, p. 199

Tuesday after Easter, 1843

J. M. J.

Dear Miss Sainte-Bécel:

I accept your proposal with all my heart, and agree to unite our prayers with yours, as our two missionaries promised you.

Have courage and be comforted in the midst of tribulation. It is a sign of God's special predilection when He sends suffering to a soul. Accept these pains from His hands with love and humility. Consider yourself unworthy to partake of the chalice which the Beloved of our heart once drained to the last drop. Accept it, nevertheless, in a spirit of gratitude. Don't be surprised that you find it hard to endure the trials that divine goodness sends you. There is nothing wrong in feeling pain, so long as we place our soul at the disposal of the divine Master. You know well that He Himself manifested sorrow at the sight of the torments He was about to suffer.

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

This was because He loved us and wanted to encourage our weakness. So long as the sorrow and pain which we feel at the sight of tribulation is not inspired by resistance to the will of our divine Master, there is nothing wrong with it. Remain prostrate in spirit before His divine Majesty. Be ready to endure all the sorrows He may wish to send you in the future, and be willing to bear those you suffer at present as long as it is His will that you should do so. Do this for love of Him and because it is pleasing to His divine will. Bear the sadness that overwhelms you, with peace and love. We ought not to forget that if crosses are not painful, they are not crosses at all. Let us embrace our crosses with all the power of our souls, no matter what it costs us.

Although you should bear your pains with great love and submission to the divine good pleasure, still, you may ask God to end those that cause you sadness. Do not ask this favor in order to be comforted—you must be ready to suffer a thousand times more if such is the will of the divine Master—but, ask that favor for the good of the souls that are dear to you. You have, I think, already recommended those intentions to the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Victories. Persevere in hoping to the very end, and never cease to ask with faith, love and humility. You will, eventually, obtain mercy. Have great faith in the divine Master and bear all things calmly and with love. Be gentle and humble of heart after the example of the Heart of your Beloved and the Heart of our most sweet and humble Mother.

Be moderate in your conduct. Desire ardently whatever may serve the glory of God, the salvation, perfection and sanctification of your soul. But let your desires be always calm and avoid excessive eagerness and that violent activity which tends rather to disturb than benefit your interior life. Our desires should be humble, and full of love, patience, and submission to the divine good pleasure. Drag yourself feebly before your Beloved until He grants your request for

LETTERS TO MISS SAINTE-BÉCEL

His glory. Do not displease Him by trying as it were, to force His hand. Ask with gentleness and meekness and do not try to force His will by demanding what He does not want to grant. Rather should you win His favor by your meekness, love and submission to His will.

Accustom yourself to keeping your soul always in a state of peace, humility, gentleness and love. Practice a certain reserve in your manner of acting, but let this be the fruit of love rather than indifference. Try to develop a calm and stable character. Such was the character of Mary, our loving Mother. Her heart was always peaceful, humble, loving, in God's presence and in her dealings with creatures. Her disposition was always the same—gentle, calm, pleasant, modest and kind to all—and her manner of acting was always moderate, humble, sweet and charitable.

In Her you have your great model. It is my hope that her Heart, so full of tender love for your soul, will pour some of that balm of divine grace into the heart of her dear child.

It is in the charity of this most pure and holy Heart that I have the honor of being,

Your most humble and devoted servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN,
Missionary of the Holy Heart
of Mary

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Letter Two La Neuville, February 28, 1844 Vol. 6, p. 95

J. M. J.

Dear Miss Sainte-Bécel:

I am pleased to comply with your request that I should write to you. If I had a better knowledge of your interior life

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

and more time at my disposal, I would write at greater length. I hope that the Most Holy Virgin will make up for my deficiency and that her most holy Heart which is so full of zeal for souls, will not fail to take care of your heart.

It is not wrong to feel sorrow about our personal problems, but we must bear that sorrow with peace, humility, love and submission to the divine will. When you suffer, live in a spirit of sacrifice as did Mary, whose heart was pierced from the time of the first moments of her joy and whose wound bled always and increased constantly. Mary had peace of soul, love and humility in her sufferings, and that, even at the foot of the Cross. Remain with her at the foot of the Cross; see how she bore her sorrows, and act in like manner in your own sorrow. Also imitate Mary at the foot of the Cross and reproduce in yourself what you see in her. Ask Jesus, ask Mary herself, to give you that grace. You suffer, so much the better. The greater are your pains, the greater will be your treasures of sanctification. It is up to you to profit from them. Joys, delights, and good-living nourish the body; afflictions, privations and sorrows nourish the soul and fill it with graces.

The misfortune of several of your relatives is your great cross. Our Blessed Lady had a similar cross to bear when she saw so many hardened sinners among her children. Bear your cross as she bore hers. I entreat you to act thus and you will grow in sanctity and in the divine love of Jesus and Mary, in which I am,

Your most humble servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

IX. LETTERS TO CLEMENCE GODRAND

Miss Clemence Godrand, an illegitimate child and rejected even by her mother, had finally at the age of fifteen found a refuge at the orphanage near Father Libermann's novitiate. To protect the girl against further persecution by her cruel mother and to provide her with a measure of emotional security, Father Libermann and two other priests took the unusual step of adopting her. Under his guidance, her tortured soul gradually regained its composure and in time she developed a flourishing spiritual life. Her illegitimacy, however, raised an almost insuperable obstacle when she wanted to enter a convent. Undaunted by the opposition, Father Libermann stood by the unusual candidate and finally managed to have her accepted in the novitiate of a well-regulated convent of Sisters.

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Letter One La Neuville, November 30, 1844 Vol. 6, p. 460

J. M. J.

My dear child:

I know very well that the reason why you wish to talk to me about your interior life is that you are eager to overcome all the obstacles to God's grace. I know that you suffer and I pray for your soul, but remember that you must explain to me in what way you suffer.

Tell your troubles to Mary, your good and beloved Mother; if she is unable to console you, then it will be clear to you that those sorrows are useful for the salvation of your soul, and must be borne for the love of God. Why desire to be

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

without pain, sorrow and trouble, when Jesus, your sweet and good Savior, desired to endure all these for love of us. Give yourself, then, with all your heart to this divine Savior and, through patient enduring, try to profit from your pains for your salvation and progress in virtue. You know how much you need to make progress. If, later on, you are called to live in the world, how will you be able to conduct yourself properly, if you have not acquired solid virtue? Be sure of one thing: without pains and crosses, you will not be able to acquire solid virtue.

Reflect on how short the time is that we spend on this earth and how long eternity will be. All our life is but an instant; eternity is endless. Is it not right, my dear child, that we should bear a small momentary pain, that lasts but the twinkling of an eye, in order that we may earn an immense weight of blessedness throughout eternity? If you could understand the advantage of suffering in this world, you would consider yourself most blessed because you have sorrow. I would even go further and say that pain is necessary for your salvation, since your flighty and lively mind and sensitive heart could cause you to lose your soul a thousand times over. You must get control over your impetuous, sensitive and volatile temperament, and the only way in which you can gain that control is through pain, trouble and sorrow. Bear your sufferings peacefully and humbly and with docile submission to God's will. Do not arouse your imagination but try to be moderate in all things and abandon yourself to God's guidance. At the same time, open your heart to your confessor. It is possible that he will not say the same things to you as I do, but that does not matter. You must see God in him and approach him with simplicity. Have confidence also in your Mother Superior. I feel sure from all that she has told me about you, that she loves you and is ready to help you as much as she can.

LETTERS TO CLÉMENTE GODRAND

When you suffer it is not at all necessary that others should notice it. On the contrary, you should do all you can to hide your pains. Do not tell your troubles to anyone except those who are God's representatives to you. When you cannot tell these latter, then go to Jesus and Mary and abandon yourself with confidence into their hands. Above all, never yield to discouragement.

I am sure that your grandmother will send you money when you need it. If it should become necessary that you should go to live with your grandmother in her old age, do not be in too much of a hurry to leave but try first to acquire the knowledge and virtues which will help you to be useful to her. When you are ready to go to live with her, tell me first what conditions at her house are like, what she does, what people live with her, and who her associates are. When we know this we will be able to take the necessary precautions to prevent harm to your soul. You know that there are always young men-boarders in her house and that you will be exposed to numerous dangers.

Your letter came while I was absent and hence the delay in replying. I shall give Mother Stanislaus your message. It is somewhat late now to be thinking of the anniversary of your baptism, but what can we do? I think that Mother Stanislaus will send you the things you asked for.

Please give my best regards to the Mother Superior of your house, and recommend me to her prayers.

I am, in Jesus and Mary,

Your most humble servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Letter Two La Neuville, June 17, 1845 Vol. 7, p. 216

J. M. J.

My dear child:

Have courage, the good Lord loves you, and I believe that you love Him a little also, even if it be very little. This suffices for, at present, He does not ask any more from you, but so arranges things that later on you will love Him very much. He keeps a little vigil light burning in your heart, and it is quite clear to you that no winds or storms are able to extinguish it. Later on this vigil light will burst forth as a great fire. At present, because there is too much green wood, it cannot enkindle a blaze. Have courage, the good Lord loves you, and He is so arranging things that the green wood will dry and the fire of divine love will inflame it. It is with the fire of tribulation that He dries the wood and, when everything is prepared, He will enkindle His divine fire and your soul will be filled with Him.

In the meantime you must suffer, and even when that adorable fire of Jesus is alight, you will still have to suffer for, as you well know, you are made to be crucified with Jesus on the Cross. What happiness! Nature cries out and resists. Let it cry; submit and abandon yourself with all your soul to the law of suffering, which the love of the Heart of Jesus imposes on the heart of His poor prodigal child.

If you surrender wholeheartedly to the most loving will of your beloved Jesus, you will undoubtedly suffer, but, at the same time, you will taste the sweetness of possessing the dear Savior in your soul. He will grow there, and, at least from time to time, will console you. He will sustain,

LETTERS TO CLEMENCE GODRAND

strengthen, and sanctify you, and when the end comes, He will glorify you for all eternity.

If you should refuse to surrender—but I am sure that this will never happen since you want to belong to God, and do, even now, belong to Him and will always be His—if you hinder and oppose His sweet will, or if you absolutely refuse to suffer, well, you will have to suffer any way. You will suffer much more because you will suffer without consolation, far from your Beloved, without merit, and to your own ruin.

Continue therefore to accept your sufferings with submissiveness and abandonment and you will thus sanctify your soul; your pains will diminish, you will have intervals of happiness, or rather, will be always happy even in the midst of pain. We are always happy when we are with Jesus, even when we are with Him on Calvary, provided we are there willingly.

Finally, be assured that it is infinitely better and more blessed to be with Jesus and Mary on Calvary than to be with Herod in his royal palace; and that holds even in this world. There is then no alternative. You will suffer with Jesus and He will be with you. This is a contract you have made with Jesus and Mary and you can be certain that they will not be the first to break the contract. If you are faithful you will be one of the happiest souls in the world.

Let us draw some practical conclusions from this:

1. Interior sufferings are necessary for you. Why? Because you are naturally inclined to self-love, vanity, and self-esteem. If you had not suffered these interior sorrows, you would have had an exalted opinion of yourself; you would be proud, always preoccupied with self; would take satisfaction from the fact that others thought well of you and commit a thousand other such faults. Mary, your good Mother, loves to have children that are humble, and it was thus necessary

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to overcome your self-love. She spoke to her Beloved Son about the matter, and He, to please His divine Mother and satisfy her Heart so full of love for her little sister, has set about the task. He has shown His Mother that this little sister should be very humble and little. He has already accomplished much and will finish the task little by little.

2. You are by nature exuberant, eager for enjoyment, and rather partial to self. Where would this have led you? Not to Jesus, but to the satisfactions of nature. Our divine Lord who died on Calvary does not want this to happen. It is His wish that you suffer with Him. He wants your heart to belong to him, and His desire is that that heart should be the heart of a child and a spouse. Do you think that He could tolerate a heart immersed in the pleasures of nature of which He does not approve? Would it be right that a child, a spouse, should be filled with joys and satisfaction while her Father, her Spouse, is hanging on the Cross?

Do you understand now why it is necessary for you to suffer pain? If He allowed your heart to be filled with joys, even spiritual joys, it is certain that you would have fallen victim to that fault which I mentioned. Now, however, your soul seeks Jesus, who is your only happiness. Your happiness is not to be found in those joys. In order to achieve this happiness, you must abandon yourself to the Divine Master.

3. You have a frivolous temperament. You like to laugh and frisk about. If you did not have to suffer, this would have led you to dissipation; you would never have acquired true virtue; you would have remained superficial and never reached solid virtue. Jesus does not care for one who is always thoughtless and scatter-brained. He likes order. He sends you afflictions and crosses and by means of these He leads you and controls you. If you are perfectly submissive—

LETTERS TO CLEMENCE GODRAND

and you will have seen that He helps you with His grace and strength to allow Him to rule you—you will be gay amidst your pains, you will acquire solid virtue, you will become more consistent in doing good, you will attach yourself more and more to the Beloved of your heart, and you will become calm, modest, meek and faithful to grace.

Does the Heart of Jesus love you? He certainly does love you greatly. Love Him in return, love His Cross, be submissive and holy, and try to profit by the crucifying goodness of the crucified Jesus. What is the source of your pains? It is the fact that you are sensitive and impressionable and have a lively imagination which can at times become violent. But, if you are faithful to God, you will conquer this to your great advantage, and will then be more tranquil. You have a volatile disposition, and in spite of your naturally excessive gaiety, there is always an underlying sadness. What can you do about that? These evil propensities are part of your nature and you must submit to the good pleasure of God, Who permits these things for your sanctification. Nothing will better serve the purpose of detaching you from earth and attaching you to the divine Master than those pains. You will be sustained and made to profit from these sufferings by the grace of Christ which abounds in you. I have already told you that to suffer thus is most useful and necessary for you, so carry your cross after Jesus with love and humility. When your sufferings are intense, remain prostrate at the feet of the Savior, offer Him your soul, abandon yourself to His divine Will, and you will be at peace in your sufferings. Avoid being preoccupied with self and, when you suffer, distract your mind and avoid self-pity. Act in such a way that others will not notice your sufferings, and speak of them only to those who are responsible for directing you, the mistress of novices or the Superior. Be always outwardly gay and even-tempered, and thus avoid looking for attention from others

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

by forgetting self. You have made great progress in this, already, since your stay at Abbeville. Be humble before Our Lord in the midst of your pains. Distrust your imagination, try to control it, and place your trust in Jesus and Mary. Take heart and do not fear, Jesus and Mary are with you.

Follow the direction of Father de Brandt with regard to your vocation. I will go further to say that from this moment you should consider the mistress of novices as your mother and should follow the rule as if you were already a novice or a postulant. It is important that you should adopt this rule, and once you do you will be at peace. Do not think of other convents. A long time ago Father de Brandt and I considered whether there might be some other convent to which the Lord would seem to call you, and we failed to find such a convent. You are in a house that is pious and regular, where they know you, love you, and would gladly receive you, so be at peace. You could not find a better community than that in which you now are, and I know of no other which would be more suitable for you.

Be convinced, therefore, in your own mind, that the pious house in which you now are is the one that best suits you. Try to see the mistress of novices frequently. Your antipathy to her does not worry me. You will soon overcome this and when you have overcome it, I must warn you to avoid being carried away by a too lively and natural affection for her. You will see that your antipathy will be changed into a strong regard, and there is a danger that it might degenerate in the way I have mentioned.

You are greatly mistaken if you think that you have no confidence in Father Porchez. Whatever you may say to the contrary, I say that you can be assured that you have confidence in him. But you will answer: "I know quite well that I have not such confidence." I assure you that you have confidence, and I know this better than you. Therefore, dis-

LETTERS TO CLEMENCE GODRAND

trust your imagination which tells you that you have no confidence in the Father. He is a holy priest, and I am certain that you will have confidence in him. The thought comes to you that you have no confidence and you begin to believe that this is so. On the contrary, it is false and prevents you from opening your heart completely to him. This is a prejudice of which you must rid your mind, and the same applies to the mistress of novices. Do as I say and you will see that I am right. You know that we have often argued about this, and when you thought that you knew better than I what was happening in the depths of your soul, you were always mistaken, and are mistaken now.

You suffer because the religious go out to the parish on a Sunday. You must despise such a thought, which is a scruple, or rather, an illusion, or perhaps childishness. Forget about it and give yourself to the good Lord. Father de Brandt is the one who started the task of deciding your vocation and he has acted with great wisdom. It is he, also, who must complete the task. In the meantime, decide on staying in the house in which you are and think no longer of going elsewhere. Your heart will find rest there in the midst of your sufferings. They love you, and you will do good there and will sanctify yourself.

Give my best regards to Mother Superior. I would have liked to write to her to explain your case, but she will, no doubt, read this letter and that will suffice.

Your most humble servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Letter Three

April 13, 1847

Vol. 9, p. 115

J. M. J.

My dear child :

Don't worry, I am not forgetting you. I did not want to reply to your letter until I should have seen Father de Brandt, and I was unable to meet him until now. I will write briefly as I want to post the letter to-day so as not to prolong your worry.

I won't enter into details about the matters you mentioned in your letter. Father de Brandt will be in Abbeville in May and you can talk the matter over with him. I have shown him your letter and told him what I thought of it. I am very pleased with your good sentiments, and we must thank Our Lord and His good Mother, who is also your Mother, for this grace. You suffer, but this is true joy. You may, perhaps, have to suffer throughout your life, and this, also, would be a great blessing. Be patient and submissive to the will of God. Those pains and crosses will be the means of saving your soul. I have frequently told you that you would find it very difficult to belong truly to God, if you did not have crosses.

Tell your good Mother that I would like to see her, and that I would appreciate it if she could come. When, on the advice of Father de Brandt—which is also my advice—you have decided your vocation, you can give a definite answer to that good Mother.

May the peace of Our Lord be with you! Be always good, regular, fervent, joyous and contented in the midst of all the pains you may have to suffer. Be docile to the divine will, faithful to God, and full of tender love for Mary. I remain,

Your most humble servant in Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN

X. LETTERS TO PAULINE LIBERMANN

Pauline Libermann was the eldest daughter of Dr. Samson Libermann, Venerable Francis Libermann's brother. She was born in Strasbourg, Bas-Rhin, on March 28, 1824. At the age of eighteen months, she, and her parents who had become converts from Judaism, were baptized. On that occasion Jacob (Venerable Francis Libermann) "first bitterly reproached Dr. Libermann for what he called his apostasy, for the Jew was still alive in Jacob, and in spite of much incredulity he still adhered to the shell of his Jewish religion."

From the very beginning, Francis Libermann was interested in Pauline. In 1828 he wrote about a visit which she, then four years old, had paid to him: "She spoke French relatively well, and had profited greatly, especially with regard to her piety, from her stay at the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Paris. This visit to Paris was a special grace which God had granted to her."

In 1830, he wrote: "It is no longer the 'little Pauline' but she is now a great lady. I hope that she will take care of the little children, especially of her little brother."

Pauline studied at the Convent of the Sisters of Providence of Ribeauville. She entered the Convent of Louven-court in 1844 and at her profession took the religious name of Sister St. Leopold in honor of her godfather, The Right Reverend Father Liebermann, who was Vicar General. (He was not related to the family of Father Libermann). Sister St. Leopold was first attached to the community of the Sisters at Amiens, where Father Libermann set up his novitiate. After that she worked for thirty years in the Convent of Dunkirk. She was finally sent to the Convent at Doullens, where she died on November 11, 1891.

Letter One

Issy, September 17, 1836

Vol. 2, p. V

Dear Pauline: (aged 12)

I promised you, my dear niece, that the first letter I would write home, would be to you. It is easy for me to keep my word, for it gives me very great satisfaction to be able to talk to you for a few moments. I was sorry that I could not see you and be with you as long as I should have liked, and I think that you were also sorry that I could not stay with you longer than one day. But what more would we now have if we had been able to prolong our conversations? Even if I had remained a whole month with you, that time, just like the one day, would be now gone. I know quite well that I might have been able to be of use to you if I had remained longer, but we should be satisfied with everything the good Lord desires. He did not allow me to spend a longer time with you, so let us be satisfied and at peace.

I stayed longer at home (with Dr. Samson) but there too the time arrived when I had to say goodbye. It was, however, very consoling for me to see how full of piety and good dispositions they were. I feel certain that, if I had remained longer with you, I should have learned to know you a little better, and this knowledge would have given me even greater consolation. I hope, my dear child, that you will make up for the brevity of my visit by the letters you will write to me from time to time. Do not feel in the least shy with me but speak to me with an open heart. If you only knew how dear you are to me and how delighted I should be every time you wrote to me cordially and openly as you would to your mamma, I would certainly receive many letters and you would be very happy to write to me. Give me this pleasure then by writing often.

LETTERS TO PAULINE LIBERMANN

When some sorrow or pain troubles you, tell me about it, and I shall be delighted to console you. I will always be ready to give you any advice you may need. If you wish to make progress in holiness, I will consider it my greatest joy to help you.

Above all else, my dear child, love the good Lord with all your heart and soul and strength. In your relations with your companions do not be too touchy and sensitive. If some one says or does things which you consider insulting, do not become angry. Remember that you also often insult the good Lord and it is His wish that you should pardon others. What you should do is to pray for those who injure you. Remember that, very often, they have no intention of causing you pain; and even when they have such an intention, it is only because of a momentary fit of temper and not because they are fundamentally opposed to you.

Be on your guard, also, against making rash judgments about your neighbor. Never tell yourself that this person did this thing for such or such an evil intention, for you should not judge the intentions of others. The good Lord does not want us to do so, nor does He want us to speak evil of our neighbor.

My dear friend, do not be troubled in mind because I speak thus to you. It is not because I think that you are guilty of such faults that I speak thus, but, knowing that you have to live in the world and that, in the world, we are exposed to the risk of committing such faults, I would like to forewarn you so that the desire I have that some day you will be perfect in wisdom and virtue will be realized. Be holy, therefore, and filled with the love of God. Be gentle and unassuming with others, especially with your regular companions. Be quick to forgive and give good example to all. Be obedient to your teachers, and work hard to prepare your lessons with care.

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Have a special devotion to the Blessed Mother, for this is the sign of the good Christian. When you plan to go to Holy Communion, prepare for it with fervor and especially make some good resolutions. After Holy Communion make a good thanksgiving, and try to carry out your good resolutions.

This is all I have to say to you for the present. I know that your parents have great hopes for you, and it is my wish that you will justify their trust. They are model Christians in their parish, and have an earnest and sincere piety, and so I am not surprised that they are full of joy at the thought that you will one day be a model in their family. Do not fail them, my dear child. They love you and so do I. I say this in all sincerity. I am convinced that our hopes for you will not be confounded. I will always pray for this intention and I think that the good Lord will hear my prayer.

Adieu, my very dear niece. I leave you in the hands of the Most Blessed Virgin. Pray well to her, and be grateful to her for her goodness and love for you. I know that you have a very sensitive heart, for I came to know you a little during the short time I was with you. Your heart is capable of loving and honoring the Blessed Virgin, your good Mother and mine. Do not allow it to remain idle and inactive. I embrace you with all my heart and leave you in the arms of Mary, recommending you to her loving care and tenderness.

Your affectionate uncle,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, acolyte

Letter Two

Issy, June 9, 1837

Vol. 1, p. 171

My dear Pauline: (aged 13)

You have been waiting a long time for a letter from me. It has certainly been slow in coming but here it is at long last.

I cannot reply to your own letter, since, after I had read it, I passed it on to your Uncle Felix and he promptly mislaid it. Unfortunately it has not turned up since. I am sorry about this as I needed it in order to reply to you. I suppose you spent your Easter holidays with papa and mamma. What a joy this must have been both for yourself and for them.

Caroline and Marie are anxious to see you. I myself would also have been delighted to have been able to spend at least eight days with you, but God did not will it so, and we had to be satisfied with seeing each other for just a few moments.

I have good news for you which, I am certain, will give you pleasure. You remember how lacking in piety your uncle Christopher was, how, when he came to Illkirch, he never wanted to go to church. We were unable to persuade him to pray to God, and he always wanted to eat meat on Fridays and Saturdays. His lack of piety was the reason why you disliked him. He often told lies, and all this was ugly and detestable. During the holidays he was home with me for eight days; Caroline wanted him to say his beads, and all the children constantly urged him to say grace before and after meals. But all to no avail, he was hardened in his evil conduct and stubbornly refused to serve God or to pray to Him. This was a cause of sorrow for papa, mamma, and me. We prayed much for him and God heard our prayers. Before he left for America to join uncle Alphonse, big blustering Christopher was converted, and he promised that he would

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be faithful to God from that on. He received Holy Communion on the Feast of Corpus Christi, and his conduct was quite good while he was here. He assured me that he would persevere in his good conduct and would always live as a good Christian.

I think that if you had seen him in Paris before his departure you would have been reconciled with him. God has pardoned him and therefore you should no longer hold anything against him. We must love him with our whole heart as God does. I know very well that you were not angry with him, but, still, you did not love him as you would have done had he been devout. Thank God and the Blessed Virgin for the conversion of your uncle, and promise them that you will be even more faithful to them in thanksgiving for this great favor.

Always love the Blessed Virgin. I presume that you are filled with love for this good and dear Mother who loves you now and will always love you more than you can ever love her. I have no doubt but that, during the beautiful month of Mary just past, you have doubled and tripled your love and devotion for this well-beloved Mother of all Christian souls. Be careful to preserve the fruits you have gathered from the exercises of this solemn month. Resolve, dear child, to perform every day some special exercise of devotion in honor of your dear and holy Mother so that you may become more pleasing to her. Get one of your teachers to decide on that devotion for you.

Further, make another resolution which will greatly please the Blessed Virgin. Resolve that if one of your companions offends you and you are angry with her, you will forgive her for the love of the Blessed Virgin. Do not keep ill-will towards her in your heart, but love her with all your heart and speak to her kindly for the sake of the Blessed Virgin, your Mother. Think of the Blessed Virgin as, not only your

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Mother, but also as the Mother of the companion who offended you, and because of this you must forgive her and love her with all your heart.

Give my regards to your good teacher, who was so kind as to write a few words to me at the end of your letter. It is unfortunate that your uncle Felix lost your letter so quickly. However, although I cannot remember the contents, I remember that it made me feel very grateful to that kind mistress who loves you very much and has a keen interest in your welfare. Thank her for me, and show yourself obedient and grateful to her.

Adieu, my dear niece. Be good, gentle and pious. This is all I ask for you from God and the Blessed Virgin.

Your uncle,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN

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Letter Three Rennes, December, 1838 Vol. 1, p. 371

My dear child: (aged 14)

I was delighted to receive your little letter. You had not written for a long time, but I do not blame you for that, since I well know that you are not always able to write when you would like to. Rennes is very far from Strasbourg and the cost of postage is high, and when papa and mamma write to me, they do not always leave room for you to add a few words. Frequently you do not even know that they are writing to me.

You fear that I suspect you of forgetting me. Oh no! I, on my part, do not forget you either. I pray for you to

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the good Lord. You told your papa to ask me to recommend certain intentions of yours to the Blessed Virgin, and I have done so.

I trust that Mary will take care of you during the coming year. She is a very good Mother. Love her and teach all your little brothers and sisters to love her too. Pray to her with all your heart and with childlike confidence, ask her to preserve you from all sin. May she prevent you from acting according to the spirit and vain standards of the world. Imitate her example. She lived in the world but never adopted its spirit. Like her, be sweet, charitable, modest, pious, peaceful, humble, and avoid all vanity. Never speak ill of anyone; judge and condemn no one; do not envy others, especially those who act in a worldly way, but be always modest, sweet, and pious, in faithful imitation of Mary.

These, my very dear niece, are the things I ask Our Lady to give you this year. They are good and holy New Year gifts. Profit by them, and you will draw great fruit from them throughout your life. They are the sincere and heart-felt wishes of your uncle.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, acolyte

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Letter Four La Neuville, November 9, 1841 Vol. 3, p. 50

My dear niece: (aged 17)

Your letter gave me great joy and all the more so since I did not expect to hear from you so soon. I am always delighted to get your letters.

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I can well understand that you are worried about your brother Francis. I foresaw that he would not do brilliantly this year, but you should not be angry with him, as I am sure it is not his own fault. The reason why he does not work well is that he finds the work difficult and is not sufficiently adapted to that sort of study. It is quite natural to have a distaste for a subject in which one is not successful and which demands much pain and labor.

Besides all this our good Francis is by nature somewhat negligent, but all his shortcomings can be traced to discouragement. That is why I repeat what I said so often when I was still with you, that you should not try to rouse him by harsh words or by telling him that others have a low opinion of his ability. On the contrary, we should always speak encouragingly, inspiring him with hope of success and exhorting him in a kindly way and from good motives to work well. Force and pressure will close his mind entirely, and expressing our poor opinion of his talents only discourages him.

His father will never be able to control his own impatience in dealing with poor Francis. You, therefore, must act as an intermediary between them. Try to console this poor friend when he has been ill-treated and gently urge him to work better. Finally do all you can to spare him suffering.

If you are able to win his heart, you will get much more out of him than his father. This will be very useful for the future, for Francis is in danger of following false paths when he reaches the age when the passions are strong. He is in danger even of losing the faith, for his judgment is not sufficiently firm to protect him against seduction.

I am almost certain that he will associate with bad young men who will ruin him. It will be a miracle if this does not happen. Try then to restrain yourself, and never lose patience with him. Treat him with kindness and affection, never

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oppose him, and in order that you may win his friendship, never say anything against him. You may, in this way, save him from many future evils.

Tell Caroline that I recommend Francis to her also. Tell her to take an interest in the things that concern him and to treat him in the same way as I have recommended to you. Later you will realize how helpful it is for a poor boy like Francis to have been treated with such care.

As far as learning is concerned I have no fears for Francis. It is not necessary that he succeed. If he only partly succeeded it would embarrass us more than if he did not succeed at all.

I have written so much that there is scarcely room for a word concerning yourself. Be on your guard against the world and its spirit. We can live in the world while abhorring its spirit, its vanity, its lukewarmness and its pursuit of pleasure.

I am very glad that you have found a good confessor, for this is a great grace from God. I shall pray the Lord that you may benefit from it and make progress in holiness and Christian virtue.

I will tell you why you should register in Paris for the Archconfraternity, but you must keep this a strict secret, as otherwise it might cause trouble between Father Muhe and myself, and I should regret this. The pastor of Our Lady of Victories told me that there was something lacking in the aggregation of the group in the Confraternity at Strasbourg and that they did not gain the indulgence attached to membership. He told this also to Father Muhe but the latter refuses to believe it. Therefore, see that you be enrolled in Paris, without however telling anyone about it, then follow the exercises in Strasbourg and you will gain the indulgences as if you followed the exercises at Our Lady of Victories itself. Send me your name and the names of the others and let me know on what day you wish to be enrolled. You will be able

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to gain a plenary indulgence on that day. Make sure that I get the names on time to send them to Our Lady of Victories before the day on which you wish to be enrolled.

If Marie wishes to become a member of the Archconfraternity, I see no obstacle to that. Tell your mother that I shall do what she asked on December 4. Tell Elisa that I am not forgetting her. She may think that I do not love her but she is very much mistaken. Next time I shall enclose a short letter to her, and I would like to get a short letter from her.

Adieu, dear Pauline.

Your uncle,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

P. S. Give my best wishes to Francis. I hope to hear the joyful news from him that he is first or, at least, second in his class. I strongly urge him to be devout and well-behaved. His behavior will depend on the company he keeps, so tell him to avoid roughnecks and children who have no religion.

Henry and Leon are in the new school. Henry will soon be a learned man. He must try to fulfill all his tasks. Leon is, no doubt, very good and obedient to his little godmother.

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Letter Five

October 6, 1842

Vol. 3, p. 311

My dear niece: (aged 18)

Since I have been slow to reply to your letter, I am all the more obliged to pray for the intention which you recommended to me.

You want to know what are the signs of a vocation to the religious life. Two things must be considered: first, in gen-

eral, whether God wants you to enter a religious Congregation, and secondly, what particular Society He wants you to enter.

Does God want you to enter a religious Congregation? I can tell you that, since you have no marked love for the world, you could with a sure conscience withdraw into a convent, and you would find there a great abundance of graces and a much greater chance of salvation than you would find in the world. Nevertheless, this is not a positive sign of a vocation. The following are the signs of a vocation :

1. The fear of losing your soul if you remain in the world, especially if, added to that, is the desire of saving your soul in a convent. This sign is more sure if, because of your temperament or faults or because of particular circumstances, you are in greater danger than other people.

2. A certain distaste for the world and the things of the world. By this I mean, a dislike for its customs, its ways, the things the world demands from those who follow its customs, as, for example, visits, compliments, parties, etc. These things are lawful in themselves, but God makes them disagreeable to certain persons who wish to withdraw from the world and enter a religious society, since in convents relations are more simple and family-like and they impose less conventional restrictions.

If, added to that dislike for the world and its ways, there is an attraction to the type of life lived in religion, then the sign of a vocation is stronger. Let me add that it happens often that those who are called to the religious life and have a distaste for the world and an attraction for the convent are not clear in their minds about things. The sign I have mentioned is, as it were, lacking in clarity, because they, at the same time, feel a craving for earthly pleasures and joys. Such a craving is evil, is displeasing to God, and therefore, should

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not be considered as an indication that one has not a vocation. It is really a temptation. We can recognize whether our craving for worldly pleasures is evil, if, when we satisfy that craving, we are disturbed and troubled in mind, if we tend to grow lukewarm and lax in piety, if our minds are filled with idle thoughts, and finally, if, after we have tasted of such earthly joys and satisfactions, we feel a certain void, a certain dissatisfaction with ourselves, even though we did not commit any serious fault.

3. When, weighed against the normal manner of life of people of our social status, we are little suited for a life in the world; and when, at the same time, we are attracted to life in religion and believe that we could easily fit in to such a life.

4. When we have a certain esteem for the religious life, when we have a desire to be called to that life, and have a feeling of pain at the thought of having to live in the world. This sign of a vocation is strengthened and becomes decisive when we have a positive desire for the religious life and suffer real pain if we have to live in the world.

5. When the thought of entering religion inspires us to live more perfectly, more piously, when it impels us to overcome our faults and make sacrifices for God, when it gives us peace of soul and devotion to God. This is all the more significant if the thought of living in the world causes us to be more slothful in fulfilling our duties, causes a lessening of fervor, and arouses the desire to satisfy our cravings and the unruly demands of nature.

6. Finally, when, in moments of recollection and fervor, after Communion and in similar circumstances, we feel the desire of entering religion. It is at such times that God speaks to our hearts through the good inspirations He gives

us and which are ordinarily in harmony with His designs in our regard. If, on the contrary, at such times, our heart turns elsewhere without any effort on our part, and does so peacefully and with interior calm, we have then a proof that we have not a vocation; at least, we should then make a thorough examination and not make any hasty decision. Good desires that truly spring from grace are accompanied by great peace and a strong determination to do what is pleasing to God.

It is not necessary that all these signs be found simultaneously in a person. It suffices that some of them be there, provided always that there are not an equal number of signs to the contrary. If this condition is fulfilled then a person has a vocation to religious life.

B. In order that a person may decide to what religious Society God is calling her, she should look for two signs:

1. An attraction to one Society in preference to another. This attraction should be a spiritual and holy attraction. We can recognize it as such if it is accompanied by holy desires, the desire and hope for salvation, the desire to serve God more faithfully and to please him more perfectly.

If the taste and attraction is only a natural one, it does not prove anything in favor of a vocation to this or that Order. Examples of this would be, if we are attracted to one Order because there is in it a person who loves us and whom we love, or if we think to find in this Order comfort and similar advantages, etc. However, it happens sometimes that a genuine supernatural taste for a certain Society which truly aims at pleasing God, is accompanied by such a natural attraction. We must then purify our heart from such evil cravings and reject the purely human desires, so that we may enter religion in a particular Society with a pure desire of pleasing God.

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2. The second sign is aptitude. If things are so arranged in one Society that we can be useful there, in contrast to another where this is not so, then we have an aptitude for the former. You, for example, have received a certain kind of education and formation, you have certain natural abilities, you have this or that kind of knowledge. You will find in this Society the means of making use of that education, that natural talent, knowledge, ability. In another you would be useless; you would run the risk of being always bored, and of being beset by temptations which you might find it difficult to overcome. In this case you must give preference to the Community which is best suited to your natural aptitudes, and in which you will more easily find rest for your soul and the means of salvation.

Sometimes also, Providence uses certain events to guide a soul to enter one Convent rather than another.

Let me return to the matter of aptitude so as to explain it more fully. Carmelites live a life of retreat and constant prayer. Poor Clares and Trappistines apply themselves to the practice of mortification. The Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul are engaged in works of charity towards their neighbor and they care for and instruct poor young girls. The Sisters of the Good Shepherd work for the conversion of penitent women. Other Societies are occupied with the instruction of children; and the type of life and the work of the latter Societies varies from Society to Society.

You should examine this question during prayer, placing your confidence in Our Lord, so that you may find out which Society is best suited to your temperament and abilities, which would be most in harmony with your spiritual taste, and which would the more easily help you to sanctify yourself.

When making your choice, do not allow yourself to become perplexed. Once you have decided to enter religion, examine for some time, together with Our Lord and Our Lady, which

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Congregation of those you know is best suited for you. If your heart draws you more particularly to one of them, describe your taste and desire to your confessor and then follow his advice without fear. You will then be doing the Holy Will of God.

I do not wish to say any more about the excellence of a religious vocation. The great love I have for your soul makes me tremble with joy at the thought that you will enter a religious Society in the near future. May Our Lord and the most Holy Virgin hasten the decision in this matter, and may they help you to fulfill your desire. My greatest joy after that would be to see our most dear Caroline follow your example. Oh, how I would like to see that dear child in the house of God and away from the ugly world. Adieu!

Your uncle,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

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Letter Six La Neuville, February 8, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 97

J. M. J.

Dear Pauline: (aged 18)

Have courage and be full of confidence in the goodness of God. He never abandons those who trust in Him. Urge your mother to pray with confidence. Tell her to have no fears and to accept with resignation the pains caused by the temporary financial difficulties in which God in His goodness places your dear family in order to sanctify it.

You are all dear to Jesus and Mary and all of you desire to serve God faithfully. Why then should you imagine that

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God is abandoning you? If he leaves you in your pain, this affliction will be temporary and the reward will be an immense amount of happiness and glory.

So tell your mother that the small pains which the good Lord sends you on this earth cannot be compared with the greatness of the glory and happiness they will merit for you for all eternity. Suffer them with joy, and look on them as treasures sent from heaven. Tell your mother that I should have liked particularly to write to her about that matter but that I am so busy that I don't know where to begin. Ask her to forgive me for not writing to her personally.

And now let me answer your question. Your desire to enter religious life is a good one, and I hope with all my heart that Our Lord will help you to persevere in it. Do not abandon that idea, I beg you, because you think that your mother will be against it. Once she realizes that it is God's will she will readily give her consent.

Do not speak about it to your mother for the present. Prepare yourself so that, when the time comes, you may follow the voice of the Bridegroom who is calling you. In the meantime make ready for the religious life by trying to acquire the virtues that are necessary for so holy a life—recollection, humility, meekness, obedience, modesty, contempt for the world and indifference to its foolish pleasures. It does not matter that you may have to wait a year or more. Do not, however, wait too long because you are just at the right age to be formed to religious virtue.

When the moment arrives do not stop because of the sorrow which your departure might cause your mother. God's interests and the salvation of your soul must come before everything else. Our Lord has said: "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." If you are more afraid of grieving her than of failing to follow the will of Jesus Christ, it means that you love your mother

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more than Our Lord. Moreover, your mother's grief will not last long. Her piety will console her when she considers that she has a child, especially her eldest, who is consecrated to Jesus Christ. And besides all this you will draw down God's blessing on your family.

And what would you do if you remained in the world? Would you not need much more money to set yourself up in marriage? Would not much more be needed than is required for one entering a convent? But do not worry, we will find the means to allow you to enter without having to pay a pension. Have confidence in God, pray to Our Lady and prepare for the religious life by acquiring the necessary virtues. I guarantee that all the rest will be taken care of. Be generously disposed to make every sacrifice that the Lord will demand of you.

It is important that at present you make once for all the unshakeable resolution of consecrating yourself to the religious life, and that you do not waver between the world and the convent. Once you have made that resolution, live as if you were to carry out your purpose immediately. Flee the world to the extent that circumstances permit. Follow no longer its fashions but always dress modestly, and do not seek any more to make an impression on others. If you act in this manner, you may feel sure that Our Lord will give you the means to enter religion.

Adieu, my dear Pauline. Have confidence in Mary and she will take care of your soul.

Your uncle,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

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Letter Seven La Neuville, November 13, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 429

J. M. J.

My dear niece: (aged 19)

I sympathize with you sincerely in your pain and worry regarding your vocation. You feel yourself drawn to the religious life, and I assure you, from what I know of you myself and from what Caroline has told me, that Our Lord wants you in religion and that it is only in the convent that you will find happiness.

Furthermore Caroline has settled your vocation for you, and you cannot suspect her in this matter! She has proved conclusively that the good Lord wants you in the convent, and as she has great authority, I hope that there is no further room for objection or hesitation on your part!

But, jokes aside, I think, my dear child, that you should not be so hesitant. Make, once for all, a good resolution in God's presence. Consecrate your body and soul to Him. Do not make a vow unless your confessor tells you to do so, but, as soon as you have made a positive resolution, consecrate yourself to Mary.

I do not think that you are meant for the world, and there is great joy in leaving and despising this ugly world. If you remain in it you will experience nothing but embarrassment and you will be exposed to committing a multitude of faults.

I would advise you, therefore, to make a novena to the most Holy Virgin in a spirit of recollection and prayer. Receive Holy Communion and then make a definite resolution. I feel certain that your choice will be for the convent and not for the world. I am convinced that, in your interior soul,

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Our Lord often pleads with you to enter religion and that He invites you to peace and recollection. Since all your desires are for that life, why the hesitation? I presume that your wavering is caused by your natural affection for your parents and for the Vicar General (Rt. Rev. Liebermann, her godfather). Such affection is good, and it is to your credit that you feel sorry to cause them grief, but such motives cannot outweigh the interior voice of Our Lord Who inspires, urges, and draws you towards the religious life.

One might ask, why make a final and definite resolution now? There is no call for haste. You could, if necessary, enter the convent a year from now. I say that it *is* important, my dear child, not to remain so long in uncertainty and hesitancy regarding this matter. Such lack of resolution is harmful to your soul, since you are constantly worried and embarrassed, and that is not good. I would like you to enjoy that peace of conscience which is the peace of the children of God. A soul that belongs to Our Lord should have joy of heart and peace of mind. You are a child of God and should enjoy the privileges which our good Father gives to His beloved children. This depends on yourself, so be resolute and hesitate no longer.

Do not fear to cause sorrow to your mother and to your godfather. Their sorrow will not last. Both of them will be very pleased when they see that you are happy. If you cannot make up your mind, consult a Jesuit Father. These Fathers are accustomed to religious life and know how to discern a vocation. Yours ought not to be difficult to decide. When you have made your decision, you may remain for some time in the world until the time to enter arrives, but during that time the world will be like a prison for you, and your connections with it like so many chains. It will not, however, be able any longer to cause you harm.

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I will help you to persuade your mother to give her consent to your entry. Have courage and be resolute. Such important matters need to be weighed but we must not hesitate too long nor remain too long in uncertainty.

Please ask your father to send me the recipe for the stuff that cures pains in the eyes, and ask him to write legibly so that I may be able to make a copy of it. Caroline is doing very well; she works hard and induces everybody to love her.

Adieu, dear Pauline, may the peace of Our Lord dwell in your soul.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Missionary of the Holy Heart
of Mary

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Letter Eight

April 14, 1844

Vol. 6, p. 166

My dear Pauline: (aged 20)

I am glad that you have asked me for advice about your vocation for it gives me an opportunity of referring to the matter again. I am convinced that you are not made for life in the world and I have not a moment's hesitation in advising you to enter a religious Congregation.

I have known people whose vocation was not as evident as yours, and who, nevertheless, made great progress in virtue in a religious Congregation. I fail to see how any doubt about your vocation can now exist. You have a distaste for the world and for the things to which persons of your age who are called to live in the world are attracted. If, now and then, you have longed for an evening party or some other

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

form of entertainment which gives pleasure to people of the world, this was only a passing thing and gave you little lasting satisfaction. I have never noticed that your tastes are those of people who are made to live in the world.

Further, you have had the desire for religious life for many years, your tastes are those of a religious; you have no aptitude for life in the world and have, on the contrary, the aptitudes required for the life of a religious Sister. Think of the number of years you have been in contact with the world and you still do not know how to adapt yourself to it. You have not acquired its ways nor learned to accept its customs, and you even feel awkward and embarrassed in your contact with the world.

I feel sure that after you have been one month in a religious community you will have completely adopted the habits of a religious and will feel perfectly at home with those who live a community life. Do you remember that one day your papa called you "eine dumme Gans" (a stupid goose)? From that moment I felt that God did not want you in the world. I was glad of that which caused you such pain because I said to myself that it would arouse in you a disgust for the world and its practices.

God has fashioned you for the religious life and not for the world. He has given you a simple character, simple tastes and simple manners. Contrast your mother and yourself and you will see what I mean. She was called to live in the world and you know her piety and fervor. If, in religious life, you one day have her piety, fervor, spirit of faith, and love of God, you will become a saint. Your mother has also a heart that is simple and righteous, but unlike you, she has not an unsophisticated character, tastes and manners. Now all this does not harm her piety. But if you were to remain in the world you would never acquire its ways. You would, therefore, find it difficult to live with people in the world and would always feel awkward and embarrassed, or else

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you would adopt worldly ways and this would do great harm to your soul.

Again, my dear child, if you stayed in the world, you would be exposed to dangers. You would risk the neglecting of your religion and the lessening of your piety and devotion. With your temperament you would find it hard to resist the dangers and troubles which would come to you through your family.

It is possible that, in spite of all, you would remain steadfast, but this is not certain. You need help to sustain your fervent piety and your devotion to God. At present such help is available to you and things are going well. But once you had left your parents' home and were yourself responsible for your conduct and interests, or were in contact with people who had not the piety and virtue of your parents, you would run the risk of becoming spiritually weak through lack of help in overcoming the obstacles you would meet.

In religious life that help will be given to you in greater measure, not only to sustain you but also to make you advance in virtue. You will have the habit, the vows, the rules, community life, the example of others, obedience, and a multitude of other powerful helps for the soul. You will, however, still have difficulties in your interior life, spiritual dryness, interior pains, etc., but all these are but trials permitted by God and they will serve to form and perfect you more and more.

Your distraction at prayer is due to your anxiety and worry about this question of your vocation and to your present vacillation and lack of resolution. You hesitate too much. Pray with confidence in God for a few days and then make your decision. You will resolve to live in a religious Congregation. Then, once you are resolved, act as quickly as possible in accordance with that resolution. This will, once for all, rid you of that indecision which is harmful to your soul.

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Do not harbor human fears nor consider human motives. What you think is certainly not the case. Your mother may sometimes have said so to you, but I am sure that it is not really so. My dear child, do not mistake an idea that comes uninvited into your mind for one to which your will adheres. The human motives of which you spoke are fictions of your imagination. You would never, with full deliberation, have said that it was for such motives that you desired to become a religious. The imagination at times conjures up such things but your will has no part in them. Your will sincerely seeks God.

It is possible that if you were wealthy you would be unfaithful to your vocation, but I greatly doubt this, for God would then give you the grace to think otherwise. Now that you are undergoing great suffering, the thought of possessing a great fortune is for you a temptation and apparent obstacle. However, if you had such riches, you would see the vanity of all that and would all the more quickly become a religious. The thoughts about riches are always more dangerous than the actual possession of them. We should, in general, avoid thinking about what we would do in such circumstances, because in thus thinking one invariably succumbs to the temptation, at least in part. Despise all such thoughts and have confidence and peace in your soul.

Adieu, my dear niece, be faithful to God. May His peace be with you.

Your uncle,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Missionary of the Holy Heart
of Mary

P. S. I shall ask prayers for the intentions of the young man you recommended to me.

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Letter Nine La Neuville, June 6, 1844 Vol. 6, p. 219

My dear Pauline: (aged 20)

I was delighted when you told me that you had finally made up your mind to enter religious life. I had never doubted that divine Goodness would grant you the grace of a religious vocation, which is indeed a great grace.

The only outstanding problem now is the choosing of the particular Congregation which you will enter. Do not worry, the principal step has been taken. The next step, the choice of a Congregation, will be taken with less difficulty than you imagine. Put your trust in Mary and you will see that everything will be settled according to her wishes.

You asked my opinion of the Congregation of the Sisters of Providence of Ribeauville. I don't know very much about this Congregation. I had thought that they had charge of boarding schools, but I got information about them recently and it seems that the Sisters work in village schools and that they have only one boarding school, that at Ribeauville. If this is so then I am inclined to agree with the advice of the Fathers you mentioned, unless you feel definitely drawn to this Society.

There is always danger in living alone unless one is strong, very strong. A firm character is needed for this sort of vocation, a conscience that can make clear decisions and is not given to worry of any kind, and a disposition that is not worried and embarrassed by irresoluteness. Those who follow that kind of vocation must be able to be their own guide with regard to their interior life, because they will not always get such guidance from their local pastor. They must also be firmly established in virtue. They must also know how to

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

conduct themselves in their relations with others, for they must necessarily have such relations, and must be able to overcome the difficulties they meet if they wish to do good. They live an isolated life and must be able to help themselves since there is no one else there to help them. God's grace helps those who are called to that state of life, but the fact remains that they have less help than those who live in a community.

I think that you, because of your character and tastes, need community life. I also think that you need a community that is engaged in the work of education, for you need occupation. The instruction you got in music will be a help to you in this work. When you are fully decided, let me know, and I will try to find a Congregation that will suit you.

Don't worry about the dowry you will have to bring in order to be accepted. I hope to find a Congregation that will waive that, and that will be satisfied if you bring a suitable trousseau. This matter will not offer any difficulty. Pray to Mary and do not hesitate, and you will see that everything will be settled as you wish. If you would like me to look for a convent, let me know precisely how far you are advanced in the study of music, whether you can teach the piano, and whether you know vocal music.

With regard to the Notre Dame Convent of which you spoke to Father Ratisbonne, do not think of it. Do not tell anyone that I said this to you. I want a good Congregation for you, one in which the members are regular and that has been in existence for a long time.

Take courage, my dear child; the matter of your vocation is much further advanced than you think. Be faithful to the good Lord. Keep your soul at peace and rely on the goodness

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of Our Lord and the protection of Mary. Pray, be good and devout, and everything will work out well. Adieu!

Your uncle,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN
Missionary of the Holy Heart
of Mary

P. S. I shall see Caroline tomorrow. They are very pleased with her at Louvencourt. She is willing to remain until next year.

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Letter Ten *Paris, July 10, 1844* *Vol. 6, p. 268*

My dear Pauline: (aged 20)

I have given serious thought to the subject of your vocation. Your soul is so dear to me that I feel obliged to do all that lies in my power to obtain for you all the spiritual advantages required for your sanctification. It is more and more clear to me that you should not enter a Congregation in which you might find yourself alone in a village. It is quite certain that you have more means of sanctifying yourself in your own family than in a Congregation of that kind. This type of work is admirable and is of great benefit to the souls for whose instruction the Congregation was founded, but it does not help the religious themselves. That they sacrifice themselves for the salvation of their neighbor makes their life beautiful, but a Congregation of this kind does not provide the means which help towards the sanctification of the members.

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

You could, I believe, save your soul in that kind of Congregation, but would, I think, make little progress in the way of perfection. Now, my dear child, you ought to advance your own sanctification, and since I know that this is your greatest desire I have done my best to find the means for its realization.

Your taste and inclination seem to point clearly to a Congregation engaged in the education of children, and you must, therefore, find a Society which has this end. The needs of your own soul require a life that is withdrawn from the world, a life of regularity and obedience, a peaceful life in the company of devout souls who pursue the same end and who, living with you in a spirit of charity, give you the good example of a holy and religious life.

I have been looking for such a Society and have had the pleasure of finding it in Paris. You will not have to provide any dowry nor even pay for your keep during your novitiate. They will accept you without these things. This community belongs to the same Congregation as that of Notre Dame in Strasbourg where Caroline was educated. You are, therefore, acquainted with its Rule and with the life you will be called to live some day. My attention was called to this community by the pastor of Our Lady of Victories who has the highest praise for it. The convent was established by the Dames des Oiseaux, who belong to the same Congregation, and at first it depended on them. The Rule prescribes that each community be separate, and so it is now on its own. It is called Notre-Dame-du-Roule after the name of the Quarter in which it is situated, and they have a beautiful house and garden. It is well placed in a section that is isolated and peaceful.

They demand only that you bring the necessary trousseau and pay your own travelling expenses. They waive the requirements of the Rule for everything else. The divine

LETTERS TO PAULINE LIBERMANN

Jesus does not ask for a dowry. He only wants yourself; so give yourself to Him wholly without reserve.

You see, therefore, that all obstacles have been removed. Make the necessary arrangements for your journey to Paris immediately. I'll allow you one month to make your preparations. If you are ready sooner than that, come along. Do not allow things to drag on and do not indulge in indecision. This is a favorable opportunity offered you; do not let it slip. If you had a good knowledge of German it would be very useful to you in that convent. I forgot to mention that this convent is characterized by great simplicity.

I shall be in Paris until Sunday next, inclusive, so reply immediately and address your letter to Hotel de Strasbourg, Paris.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

Your uncle,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

P. S. I would like to have written to your good mother to console her, but I have not the time at present.

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Letter Eleven La Neuville, July 30, 1844 Vol. 6, p. 287

My dear Pauline: (aged 20)

I am so overwhelmed with work that I can hardly find time to breathe, but still I feel obliged to write a few words to you to help you to overcome your fears which are perfectly groundless.

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Be at peace, be calm and make ready to come to Paris. Cut short the time of waiting instead of prolonging it, and walk with a firm step to answer God's call.

I have explained exactly to the Superior of the convent at Roule what your academic qualifications are. You have all that is required to be accepted. The Sisters are principally interested in your talent for the piano and not in your ability to teach a class. Moreover, you will have enough time during the two years novitiate to perfect yourself in the sciences in which you are deficient. Your father tells me that you know enough German to teach a beginners' class. You can perfect your knowledge of this language and you will be a useful specialist in that subject in the convent. Those who told you that the piano was not taught in that convent were mistaken. It is principally because of your proficiency in that field that they count on you.

You will find in that community good religious who are very devout and charitable. Great peace and union reigns among them. Father Desgenettes told me this. The Reverend Mother is remarkable for her sweetness and simplicity. I did not meet any other members of the community, but I was very pleased with all that I saw and heard.

Be reassured, then, and come without fail during the first days of September. Disperse all those clouds which the devil is trying to spread over your mind. Have confidence, let your heart be detached. Divine Goodness offers you a great grace. Be grateful to Him for it. Be faithful and do not hesitate for one moment.

Your uncle,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

P.S. Miss Henriette Koestler has arrived. Rev. Mother Superior of Louvencourt seems pleased. I have not yet seen Henriette. I wonder what Caroline will say at the news.

LETTERS TO PAULINE LIBERMANN

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Letter Twelve *Paris, July 7, 1851* *Vol. 13, p. 30*

My dear Sister St. Leopold (Pauline) :

You should not be surprised nor anxious when, from time to time, your heart plays tricks on you. The gardener is not surprised that the weeds return after he has raked and cleared the soil. He knows beforehand that some will return and that he will have to repeat the weeding over and over again. What does he do when the weeds reappear? He starts raking once more, and after long and repeated raking, he succeeds in getting his garden in good shape.

We should not allow ourselves to become discouraged. Let us, for love of our Divine Spouse, pull up all that springs from our evil nature, and set to work as soon as something bad appears so as not to allow the evil weed to grow strong. Besides, you should know that weeds grow more quickly in good soil. Sensitive and loving hearts are made to belong entirely to God and to sacrifice everything for Him. But we must expect to find in them the brambles and thorns which you mentioned. You must keep busy pulling them out, and in the end they will disappear. With patience, courage, perseverance, humility, confidence in prayer, you will be able to overcome all difficulties.

Your uncle,

Father Francis Libermann

Letter Thirteen Paris, November 5, 1851 Vol. 13, p. 361

My very dear Sister :

I am very happy to learn that you have at long last been able to find a good retreat master. You needed such a master and it is good that God has granted you your desire. It seems, however, that you are always on the look-out for something that can cause you anxiety. When the good Lord gives you honey, you very quickly take a pinch of pepper after it. You have scarcely finished telling me that you have drawn much benefit from your retreat when you add: "*I believe that the good Lord will demand a more severe account from me because of the graces He has given me.*" This is what I call taking a pinch of pepper directly after the honey.

Now, why should the good Lord ask you for a more rigorous account? Does a mother give a nice dress to her child in order to have the satisfaction of scolding her when, later on, the child soils it? And does the child who received the nice dress get upset because it was love that prompted the mother to give it to her? On the contrary, the child is satisfied, she is happy. Of course, she does take care not to soil the nice dress which her mother has given her. You should act in the same way. Be pleased and feel happy about God's infinite love for you, and do not insult His goodness and His great love for you by yielding to fears. It is not to make you fear Him that He gives you graces. Therefore, be filled with gratitude to Him for His goodness, and profit from those graces by pleasing Him more and more.

The difficulties you see in the way of your spiritual progress are not as great as you think. They exist solely in your imagination and your feelings, and are not found in the

LETTERS TO PAULINE LIBERMAN

depths of your soul. You wish to belong to God and you do belong to Him. You desire to belong to Him, not merely in terms of a vague willingness, but also in practice. However, your difficulty is that your imagination does not always permit a sense-perceptible consciousness of God. This in no way affects the substance of things nor does it prevent you from belonging really to God or from practising the virtues that make you pleasing to Him. Your faults, and nobody is exempt from these, make their presence felt in your feelings, but the will does not consent to them. The greatest evil, and perhaps the only evil in your case, is that this difficulty arising in your imagination upsets you. The appearance of a defect in this manner makes you at once tremble with fear. This is the thing that must be avoided absolutely. *You must not, therefore, worry about anything.* Remain calm and peaceful and full of humble confidence in God, even when you have consented to a fault. If you remain in peaceful confidence, I will vouch for everything. Do not fret, either, when you find traces or remnants of a past emotion in you. Bear this as a cross which you must carry as long as God permits it to remain with you. One thing you must do is to bear it with peace, complete submission, humility, and confidence in God.

Be assured that there is no longer any evil in the things that remain in you and that your will has no longer any share in them. Such emotions leave behind some traces which remain in your senses and imagination in spite of yourself. Remain at peace, then, and despise all those thoughts that come to your mind, and you will the more quickly be rid of them.

With regard to the affairs that concern your beloved Congregation, do not become agitated, but leave everything in God's hands. He will come to your assistance when you least expect it. Let things take their course, have peace of mind,

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

and confidence in God; and abandon yourself entirely to God and Our Lady. It is divine Goodness that caused that you should enter religion, and rest assured that you will live and die consecrated to God.

Don't be angry with Father de Brandt. He acted for the good of your Congregation. If he has erred, God permitted it for reasons known to Him alone. Submit yourself to God with peace and love, and learn to see in men nothing but instruments in His hands.

May the peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ remain with you and fill your soul.

Your devoted uncle,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, Superior

XI. LETTERS TO CAROLINE LIBERMANN

Caroline Libermann, second eldest daughter of Dr. Samson Libermann and niece of the Venerable Libermann, was born at Illkirch near Strasbourg on May 15, 1827. She was educated at the Notre Dame Convent at Strasbourg, and at Louvencourt, entered the Congregation of the Holy Hearts and took the name of Sister St. Agnes. She later joined her sister Pauline (Sister St. Leopold) at the convent at Dunkirk. Venerable Francis Libermann visited his two nieces there in 1851, one year before his death. Caroline died at Dunkirk on October 16, 1867.

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Letter One

Rennes, 1837

Vol. 1, p. 371

Praised be Jesus and Mary!

My dear child: (aged 10)

I am writing this little letter to you in order that you may place your trust in Jesus and Mary and love them with all your heart. I hope that you are still persevering with the holy thought of consecrating your self entirely to their service. Be courageous and patient, dear child of Jesus and Mary. Consecrate yourself from this very moment to their love. Promise them that, if they give you the grace to withdraw from this corrupt world which is not meant for you, you will love them with all your heart. You must be patient for a few years more. I hope that, in time, your bonds will be broken and that you will attain the object of your most ardent desires.

I have high hopes of seeing you here with me in the city of Rennes. I would be able to place you in a convent of very

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fervent religious. This Congregation was established by our Founder (St. John Eudes), so that if you were there you would then become "my dear Sister" instead of my niece. But it is not this that should give you the greatest pleasure, but rather the thought that you may begin to hope that the good Lord will hear your prayers.

In the meantime continue to be very devout, do not frequent the world, and do not make friends with worldly people. Take no part in the world's amusements and pleasures. If you are faithful, my dear child, God will overwhelm you with His graces and favors, and the Blessed Virgin will look upon you as her cherished child. It is far better to possess Our Lord's favor than to be loved by the world. Henceforth you must aspire to please Jesus only. He wishes you to consecrate yourself entirely to Him. Rejoice with all your heart, dear child of Jesus and Mary, for your joy should be very great. This divine and all-lovable Jesus has looked favorably on you. And what did you do to please Him? Nothing. It is His great love for you that has caused Him to choose you to be His spouse. Is not this a great kindness on His part? Be faithful, then, and keep yourself from stain. Avoid sin as the evil most to be feared in this world, as the greatest misfortune that can befall you, because by sin you displease Our Lord Jesus. Lead a retired life, and do not make social visits. Since, however, this will not suffice unless there is order in your life, here is a rule that you may follow :

As soon as you awake in the morning, give your heart to Jesus and Mary, and ask of them the grace to love them more than the day before. Have a fixed hour for rising and when the hour strikes, get up immediately without delay, in order to please Jesus, our good Father, and Mary, our dear Mother. Dress promptly, and then kneel down and offer yourself again to God and recite an Our Father, Hail Mary and Gloria. Then finish your toilet and say your morning prayers unless there

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is some job you have been told to do in the house. If so, do this work peacefully and then say your prayers. You would do well to assist at Holy Mass every day and I ask your mother to give you permission to do so.

I sent you several books of devotion last year. You should do a quarter hour's reading both morning and evening from one of these. Your mother will I hope allow you to do this. Take a life of a saint and read it through from start to finish. Do not read different extracts from the life but always continue your reading from the place where you stopped the previous time. Never omit your daily recitations of the beads. Have a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Pray every day to the good Lord to give you the grace of entering a religious Congregation and of remaining free from sin. Ask the Most Holy Virgin to obtain that grace for you.

Be obedient and docile always to the commands of your mother. Be kind and charitable to your brothers and sisters and to all others. I mention particularly your brothers and sisters because you have more opportunities of failing in kindness and charity towards them. Yield to them in everything and do everything you can to please them. Never become impatient with their little faults but bear them with calm. Do not be too ready to correct them lest this serve only to irritate them. If you wish to reprimand them for some fault, pray first for them to God and the Blessed Virgin, and gently advise them not to commit such faults again.

If it should happen that they become angry with you, there is no reason why you should also become angry. On the contrary, you must try to calm them by your gentleness. Don't think yourself better than others and never set yourself up as superior to them. They, unlike you, are not meant to be religious some day. One who intends to become a religious must be incomparably more pious and more perfect than others. Humble yourself before God because, although He deigns to

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give you the grace of a vocation to the religious state, you are still so imperfect.

Go to confession as often as your confessor will allow you and prepare for it in a holy manner. Examine your conscience peacefully before God and avoid becoming anxious and troubled. Stir up your sorrow, but always without worrying. If you have any sorrow or trouble, write to me. Prepare well for your First Holy Communion if you have not yet received it. After your First Holy Communion receive as often as your confessor permits and prepare for it with great fervor. After Communion make some good resolutions and persevere in them.

Adieu, my dear Caroline, be faithful to God. This alone I desire.

Your uncle,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN

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Letter Two La Neuville, February 16, 1842 Vol. 3, p. 144

J. M. J.

My good and very dear Caroline: (aged 15)

I wish I had more time to impart to you my great desire for your sanctification, an object that is dearer to me than you can imagine.

My heart is filled with grief and I am full of compassion for you when I see you struggling against the world and its vanities. You are afraid that you will not attain to the blessedness of heaven. My dear child, I feel keenly the pain such thoughts must cause you, living as you are in the vain

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and corrupt world. Such fears are a great grace given by God to safeguard you from the world and its false attractions. Remember that I told you that if you refuse to love the world you will save your soul. Yes, I repeat these words without fear of being mistaken and confident that they are true.

I have only one fear in your regard, namely, that you might come to love the world with its pleasures and vanities. This is the one bulwark the enemy desires to build in our soul in order to oppose God's grace. Oh, my dear friend, do not allow that enemy of God to win a victory over you. When I think of the interior state of your soul and consider the profusion of natural and supernatural gifts with which the good Lord has filled it, and then, on the other hand, when I see the efforts of the enemy who is doing all in his power to thwart God's merciful designs in your regard, and the risk you run of growing weak and allowing yourself to be led astray by the illusions of that dangerous enemy, I feel like shedding torrents of tears.

Be very prudent, therefore, my dear child, and do not cast your God-given pearls before swine. Do not surrender those graces and gifts of God to the demon and the world. Do not be satisfied with a lower degree than that which God desires for you. Do not use the natural gifts which divine goodness has given you to please the world and to foster vanity and self-complacency. Do not allow the supernatural graces of faith, purity and simplicity of heart to be trodden underfoot by the demon, but use them for your own sanctification.

You are afraid that you might lose your soul. Your only ambition seems to be to *save* your soul, and you are not concerned with becoming a saint. But, my dear child, I look further than that. I hold firmly that, in spite of the fury of His enemy, God will sanctify you. I go even further and say that you will never be able to remain midway between

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

the world and God. You will either surrender to the world and be lost, or you will surrender to God and become a saint. Make your choice, my dear child; it is a matter of life or death for you.

My good child, give yourself to Jesus! I don't know if I am a prophet, but the most tender love which the good Master gives me for your soul leads me to believe that you will be faithful to your God, that you will give yourself generously to Him, and that you will trample underfoot the world, the flesh and the devil. Be generous in renouncing Satan, his pomps, and his works.

Why be so weak when Jesus loves you and Mary looks upon you as her beloved child? What can the world give you but amusements, pleasures, vanities, ephemeral things that barely touch your soul and leave in their wake interior pain and trouble, and, at the same time, cause you to lose Jesus and Mary. You become for Jesus and Mary a cause of sorrow, and even perhaps an object of horror. If, on the contrary, in order to live only for Jesus and His holy love, you despise the world with its foolish and deceptive vanities, you will sanctify yourself and will enjoy even in this life a happiness which surpasses all that you can imagine, or you do not yet realize what it means to love God and the happiness that comes from this love.

In saying this I do not mean that you are obliged to enter a convent. It would be possible for you to live a good life in the midst of the world. Still, I know that you have very great difficulties and that, because of your temperament, you will always be in danger of being carried away. That is the reason why I say quite frankly that, henceforth, I wish most earnestly to occupy myself before God with your sanctification. I will not be satisfied with obtaining your *salvation*, but I will ask Our Lord to fulfill His merciful designs in your regard. His designs are much greater than you imagine.

LETTERS TO CAROLINE LIBERMANN

If you do not become a saint, you are wanting in what God demands of you. You are still far removed from that sanctity, but have courage and strengthen your resolve. Be faithful to God's grace and you will succeed. God will demand sacrifices from you, the first being that you renounce your craving for the world's vanities and its insipid satisfactions. Remember what He said: Whoever leaves father and mother, brothers and sisters, his own well-being or anything else, for love of Him, will receive a hundredfold in this world. That means that he will receive the riches of grace in greater abundance, and a happiness that is incomparably superior to anything that he would have enjoyed from the earthly things which he has relinquished for love of God.

Although I am convinced that God wants you to enter religious life, I am resolved never to speak about which Congregation you should choose. Henceforth, I shall pray to Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin for this intention. I do not wish to discuss the question with you, because you are not yet capable of appreciating the riches of divine mercy which you will find in that life. And so I will treat of the matter with Our Lord and His most holy Mother. If I obtain for you the grace I am asking, then you will surely speak to me about the matter and I shall discuss it with you.

For the moment I shall content myself with asking you what benefit you can expect from the world which is so foolish and proud. You might receive some vain flatteries, but at the same time you will meet with indifference, contempt, contradictions, meanness, and even worse. You will have innumerable heartaches, and will experience the jealousy and envy of others, or you will feel jealous and envious of them. I have not time to enter into details, but say simply that your life will then pass like the experience of a person in a dream. Days and years will pass away amidst boredom and sadness, and with little consolation, and your life will

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lack that generosity and happiness which is a preparation for a blessed eternity.

In the convent you will also meet with sorrows and crosses, but you will be there in order to sanctify yourself for the glory of God. Jesus will be with you to console and strengthen you. All these pains and crosses will be instruments in His hands which He will use to sanctify you, and your eternal glory will be great.

Adieu, my dear niece. I am, with all the tenderness of the charity of Jesus and Mary,

Your uncle,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN

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Letter Three Paris, November 4, 1851 Vol. 13, p. 367

My dear Sister (St. Agnes):

May the peace of Our Lord fill your soul, may it guard your mind and your heart and unite you to Jesus, your divine Spouse.

My dear child, do not be fearful and anxious, you will never be separated from Jesus. You have given yourself to Him, He has accepted you as His bride, and He will not repudiate you. May your heart be always strong and calm in the midst of tribulations. Jesus is with you, He is for you, and it is He that sustains and strengthens you.

I have watched with great consolation the dispositions of your soul during the crisis through which it has pleased God to allow your beloved Congregation to pass. I see God's hand clearly in all this, for, knowing you as I do, I could not understand how it was possible for you to remain calm during

LETTERS TO CAROLINE LIBERMANN

that painful time. It proves that the good Master is giving you His support in a special manner. Viewed in this light, as well as from other points of view, it is evident that that cross is in reality a favor granted to you and to the whole Congregation. It will result in great graces for the religious life. Be assured that divine goodness will not abandon you. Take advantage of God's kindness to forward your sanctification.

The type of shock from which you suffered is always accompanied by very great graces. It is in such critical moments that we learn to put into practice that humility of heart so warmly recommended by the divine Savior. We realize that we depend on Him alone, and this interior dependence becomes a habit with us. We come to appreciate the nothingness of all things human, and detach ourselves from all things in order to live solely with and in Jesus.

That tranquillity of mind which God has been pleased to grant you will enable you quite naturally to arrive at total abandonment to His holy dispositions. Adopt therefore these sentiments of interior humility and place yourself in complete dependence on your divine Savior concerning your own interests and those of the entire Congregation. Christ is your Master. Allow Him to do with you and your dear Sisters all that His divine goodness judges proper. Be perfectly submissive to all His wishes.

I am not surprised that your imagination has prompted you to become troubled and anxious. The good Lord will give you the grace to overcome these imaginings and to remain peaceful and submissive, humbly abandoned to Him, and filled with love for whatever He may desire to do. Avoid speculation about what the future may bring, and refrain from considering what you will do or what might happen to you in this or that eventuality. Live for the present moment and remain in God's presence with a humble heart.

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

Since the affairs (concerning the Convent) of the Sacred Heart have failed, do not occupy your mind any longer with this question. If another plan is suggested, remain at peace and allow the good Lord to act.

Your plan to follow your good Mothers everywhere is excellent and worthy of a child of God. It is exactly what I should have expected of you and I am grateful to the good Lord for having inspired such sentiments in you. However, since I am confident that God will not abandon His servants, I am convinced that that plan will be executed. I trust that He will preserve the community as it is at present by coming to its assistance with unexpected help, and I have no doubt that He will give it new graces to increase its fervor. God usually gives great graces after severe trials. If, however, it is not in God's designs to keep you together in His Holy Name, you and your sister must be without fear and must trust in Him. He will not abandon you, that is certain. In no case will you and your sister return to the world.

Regarding the feelings that have been aroused towards Father de Brandt, you ought to realize, poor children, that it is only a case of nature crying out. Do not attach any importance to such cries, and merely avoid talking about it. Recall the example of your Divine Spouse. The Pharisees constantly persecuted Him, the soldiers tore His flesh, they crucified Him with diabolical malice, but Jesus remained silent. He loved them and pitied them. Father de Brandt may have made mistakes; he may have done harm to your community, but his intentions were good. He desired to help you and was firmly convinced that he was doing you a great favor, and he was sincerely attached to you. He erred, but believe that this is causing him great sorrow. He deserves your affection and compassion much more than the Pharisees and the soldiers merited the love of the

LETTERS TO CAROLINE LIBERMANN

Savior. In any case, do not worry about the thoughts that enter your mind with regard to this matter. They are spontaneous movements of nature and your will rejects them.

Concerning the confidence which your good Mothers have in him, there is no need to worry, since it will not lead them to commit themselves to anything that they have not carefully examined. On the other hand, I am delighted to see that your dispositions towards them are so exemplary. Continue thus to be a consolation to them.

You may follow the method prescribed by the Jesuit Father for the confession of your faults. Treat yourself with mildness in the confessional as everywhere else. State things with calmness, moderation and mildness. The decision of the chaplain regarding the Ember Days of September is correct. In all cases of doubt you must obey the decision of your Superiors.

Your very devoted and affectionate uncle,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

**XII. LETTERS TO THEODORA LIBERMANN
(SISTER MARIE-THERESE OF JESUS)**

Elisa (Marie-Elizabeth) Libermann, daughter of Dr. Samson Libermann and niece of the Venerable Libermann, was born at Illkirch near Strasbourg on October 27, 1831. When she was seven years old, her godfather, the famous convert from Judaism Father Theodore Ratisbonne, gave her the name of Theodora to replace that of Elisa.

Theodora did her studies at the convent of the Sisters of Louvencourt, and returned to Strasbourg in 1848. In July 1852, she entered the Novitiate of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts, to which Congregation her sister Caroline already belonged. She took the religious name of Marie-Thérèse of Jesus. It is noteworthy that she began her religious life after the death of Father Libermann in 1852. She died on October 23, 1919.

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Letter One

February 1843

Vol. 4, p. 121

J. M. J.

Dear Theodora: (aged 12)

I was charmed by the beautiful letter you sent me and very pleased to see how well it was written. There were misspellings but these were few. You are making progress, so have courage, things are going well. I feel certain that with patience and courage you will be at the top of your class. Since a Christian child should do everything for love of God, work for the love of our good Lord, and not to be first or one of the first. When you work in order to learn what you are ex-

LETTERS TO THEODORA LIBERMANN

pected to know, you are doing what is pleasing to God. He gave you intelligence, not that you might let it remain in ignorance, but that you should educate and instruct it. Besides, think of the pleasure you will give your mother and father if you learn well and are successful. In giving them pleasure you are doing something that is pleasing to God. You know well that the Gospel tells us that the Child Jesus did all He could to please the most holy Virgin, His Mother, and Saint Joseph, who was only His fosterfather. You must imitate the Child Jesus and offer your labors to Him.

Your outbursts of excitement and temper are due to the vivacity of your temperament, but this does not mean that you are excused before God. You must ask His pardon each time you yield to these outbursts. Invoke the Blessed Virgin often and ask her to obtain patience for you. When you have given in to anger, you should impose some penance on yourself, such as saying a decade of the beads or an Our Father and Hail Mary kneeling before the crucifix in the drawing room, or reciting the Miserere or other prayers. After that go and beg pardon from the one you have offended by your loss of temper, and now and then at night tell your father about your fault. You will find that the Good Lord will hear you and you will get rid of your fault gradually. Do not be discouraged if you happen to relapse into that fault. Rise up, ask Our Lord's and Our Lady's pardon, make good resolutions, and you will be heard.

If you allow yourself to become discouraged after a fall, you will fall all the more frequently, and will in the end give up all thought of correcting yourself. You will then be like the man who does not see what is before Him and falls into the mud. Do you think that he will stay in the mud? Of course not. He will quickly get up, clean himself as best he can, and then walk on, but now using greater precaution. That is what you must do. In moments of passion, you do

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

not see clearly. Your mind is excited and cannot fix its attention properly, and thus you become angry and fall into the mud. You must rise quickly, that is you must calm yourself, clean off the mud by asking pardon from God and from the one you have offended. If the man falls a second and third time, he always gets up and cleans himself as he did the first time. How foolish we would consider him if we heard him say: "I am always falling, I already have fallen three times, I don't want to get up any more" and if he then chose to remain stuck in the mud.

You would be like this foolish man, if you allowed yourself to become discouraged. Each time you fall you must be determined to get up, correct yourself, and ask pardon.

Adieu, my dear child. Pray to the good Lord for me, I will not forget you.

Your uncle,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

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Letter Two La Neuville, November, 1845 Vol. 7, p. 408

My good Theodora: (Aged 14)

It is a quarter to ten, but I must write these few words to you before going to bed, even if tomorrow I shall suffer for it by an attack of migraine.

I have heard that you were very upset at the news that Caroline was to enter the convent. I understand perfectly well, my dear child, that your sensitive soul suffers and grieves at the thought that you will thus be separated from a sister you love so dearly; but what can we do when God's will becomes manifest to us?

LETTERS TO THEODORA LIBERMANN

Re-awaken in your heart all the sentiments of faith which God's mercy has placed there. Console yourself with the thought that your dear sister, by taking this courageous step, makes herself pleasing to the God of greatness and goodness, Whom you love sincerely. Let you also make an act of courage and generosity. Offer to God the sacrifice of this well-beloved sister. You will be rewarded for it by a new outpouring of His graces and favors. If your poor heart is still aching and your soul sorrowful, go to your beloved Jesus and offer Him your heart. Offer Him your aching heart which is still bleeding from the painful sacrifice it has made.

Show that you are a true child of God, a worthy and dear child of Mary. It is precisely because Caroline is dear to you that you must make the sacrifice of her to your sweet and lovable Jesus. He asks you to make this sacrifice because of your tender love for Him. Mary, the beloved Mother of your soul, asks you to make it with a heart full of fervor. Have courage then, dear child, and generosity and greatness of soul. Show Jesus and Mary that you love them and that you are capable of doing something that is pleasing to them no matter how much it costs you.

You are afraid that Caroline may have been impelled by some fancy or caprice. But, my dear friend, in this matter you should trust the decision of her wise and experienced directors. Do you think that the "little Mamma" would have accepted her, and that her aunt, Madame St. Alexandre would have been satisfied, if they had not judged that what she did was in conformity with God's will.

You can see then, my dear friend, that you are mistaken. You judge things according to the sentiments that well up in your own heart. It is your loving heart that makes those objections but your good judgment has no share in them. Be at peace my dear child; if Caroline is where God wants her to be, she will find there her greatest happiness. If, on

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the contrary, she had failed to listen to the voice of God calling her, she would be unhappy, very unhappy, her whole life. Would you want her to jeopardize a lifetime of happiness? Would you want her to expose herself to the dangers of the world, and run the risk of remaining in it against God's will, and so being always unhappy? Of course not. This would make you shed bitter tears.

Be calm and contented; God is guiding your dear sister, Mary is watching over her, and she will not be unhappy in religion. You are making a great sacrifice but you do it for the happiness of your beloved sister in this world and the next.

Do not worry about Caroline. If God has not actually called her to the convent, the steps she has taken will not matter. If she is not meant for religious life, she will certainly not remain in it. In giving it a trial now she will know much better how to judge the matter when your father comes here in March. You see then that you have no cause for worry just now. If God wants Caroline to be a religious, you will be the first to say that she ought to remain in the novitiate. If God does not want it, she certainly will not remain. Therefore, be at peace, and pray fervently to the Blessed Virgin that all may come about according to God's good pleasure. For your own part, try to be good and very fervent so that your prayers may be heard.

Adieu, my good Theodora. If it is at all possible I shall come to see you next week. I would like to have seen you yesterday, but I looked everywhere on the playground among the children for you, and not seeing you there, I presumed that you were in class. Besides, I did not know at that time that you were suffering so much sorrow. I shall do my best to make reparation for the suffering I might have caused you. Adieu!

Your uncle,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

XIII. LETTERS TO SISTERS ST. LEOPOLD,
ST. AGNES OF JESUS, AND MISS
THEODORA LIBERMANN

Letter One *Rome, August 2, 1846* *Vol. 8, p. 197*

My dear nieces:

Though guilty, I am repentant, and you know that a good act of contrition takes away all sins. My contrition is so sincere that my forehead is covered with drops of perspiration! And moreover, if my heart is aching with sorrow because of my grievous fault, I have reason for rejoicing because of the profit you have drawn from it. Sister St. Leopold has overcome a great temptation to become angry with me, and Sister St. Agnes of Jesus has made a wonderful sacrifice. Only our good Theodora remains silent, but I feel sure that it is not because she holds anything against me. She is constantly at her studies and this does not leave her a free minute. That is why her silence is more eloquent than the most beautiful letters. It is possible, nevertheless, that there might still remain a little resentment in a corner of her heart. I will try to erase this by bringing her a small reliquary containing relics of St. Therese and St. Elizabeth; I think that this will speak to her heart. I shall try to bring for each of our two Sisters a small reliquary, one containing the relics of St. Paul and St. Leopold, and the other those of St. Charles and St. Agnes.

If there is anything else you want, write yourselves or get someone to write. There is still time as I shall remain in Rome until the end of August and possibly until the 8th or 10th of September.

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I have seen the Holy Father. He is full of goodness and kindness. All who have had the privilege of meeting Him are very pleased. The Roman people have an ardent filial affection for the Pope, a thing that had not been witnessed for many years.

I myself am in excellent health at present. I paid my tribute to the heat immediately I arrived in Rome, for I was unwell for ten days and was unable to go anywhere or to do anything. This left me with a pile of work and prevented my writing to you. But now everything is going well, very well. I feel much better than when I was at La Neuville. Throughout my stay here in the Holy City, the heat has been excessive. I have not seen a cloud since I arrived and there has not been a drop of rain for the last three months. This drought may last for another fortnight or month. The heat is constant and does not seem to lessen or increase. The nights are pleasant and cool, but from eleven to two or three we have heat such as we never experience in the North. I had to go out twice at one o'clock and it was just like walking in a furnace. One feels comfortable inside the houses and we manage to arrange things so that we are all right. I feel cool in my room, and am more at ease there than I was at La Neuville during recent years. But enough about myself!

And you, poor children, you are orphans! Your good mother has weaned you, and it has been impossible for me to be with you to console you even a little, and to mitigate the pain caused by her death. I think the good Lord has disposed things so that your sacrifice may be fruitful. Have courage! God loves you and Mary protects you.

If you are faithful, your souls will grow in divine love. You know that we must have courage, devotedness to God, and detachment from all earthly things, from the people who are dear to us, and from ourselves. The Savior speaks to you, you hear His voice speaking in your hearts, you understand

LETTERS TO SEVERAL SISTERS

Him and you practice more and more perfectly from day to day what He suggests to you. By acting thus you will continue to suffer for a while yet, but this suffering will sanctify you and in the long run it will make you happy already in this world. This happiness greatly surpasses all natural satisfactions and anything that mere nature is able to give.

O my dear children, I am filled with joy when I reflect on all God's goodness towards you, and when I see that you will be faithful. I feel convinced that you will be faithful when I consider all the graces which God will give you and His loving predilection for you.

And you, dear Sister St. Agnes of Jesus, you are the "lamb of Jesus." He loves you with a special predilection. That is why in all probability He is crucifying you now and will continue to do so for some time to come. Rejoice with all your soul! Jesus wants you to be a lamb, a lamb full of meekness, simplicity, humility, and docility to His divine voice, and full of love and deep attachment to your divine and beloved Shepherd.

You cannot expect Him to make you a cherished sheep, if He is not allowed to tear away from you what is faulty and whatever He finds in you that is contrary to the holy life of a lamb of Jesus. You know how much work the divine Savior still has to accomplish in you in order that He may make you what He wants you to be and what you yourself also ardently desire.

You will succeed, my dear Sister St. Agnes. It will hurt, it will hurt very much, but have courage. Jesus carries you on His heart, in His arms, on His shoulders, like a beloved sheep. He will afflict you with one hand and support and carry you with the other. With every blow you suffer interiorly, Jesus' hand will at the same time remove a corresponding thorn from your soul. This is painful but your

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

cure is in sight. His treatment of you will make you beautiful and lovable in His sight.

Happy child of God! Happy lamb of Jesus! You can fully rejoice in the possession of the Heart of that dear Lord. Be glad because you are frequently able to offer Him the sacrifice of yourself, of your soul, and by so doing, to become more dear to Him. Be faithful, very faithful. The reward is exceeding great even in this world. That you will be faithful, I have no doubt.

To both of you I recommend that you walk, not in the way of fear, but in the the way of sacrifice, meekness, and humility. It is a way of love, of pure love. Fear is unworthy of souls that are dear to Jesus and Mary. The way of fear in such souls is unthinkable.

Adieu, my dear nieces.

Entirely yours in the charity of Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

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Letter Two Paris, January 17, 1851 Vol. 13, p. 91

My very dear Sisters:

Your letter grieved me for I fully realize that my silence must have caused you sorrow. Your good hearts have tried to excuse my negligence, but, being unable to find a plausible excuse, you have tried to make a good resolution. You were then faced with the question of how to carry out this resolution, which would require that the hearts which God gave you should be changed for others. Further, since the resolution was not made at the end of mental prayer it did not bind in conscience. But, joking aside, I must first reassure you, and then express my surprise at your not receiving my reply

LETTERS TO SEVERAL SISTERS

to your second last letter of the New Year. I am certain that I answered within a fortnight, so you can believe with easy hearts that I did not commit the fault of not replying. Be assured that I have not forgotten you, nor will I ever forget you. Your souls are too dear to me to allow that this should happen. Write to me always for the counsels and consolations you need.

I sincerely wish that Theodora would finally find a permanent home. It is a pity that she was unwilling to come to Dunkirk at the beginning of this year. The poor child must be very lonely in Strasbourg, and we must pray for her.

I have not yet said anything about my New Year good wishes. It is really useless to speak about them to you, since by expressing those wishes I shall not add anything to the desires I have for your souls' sanctification and for your happiness in this world and especially in the next. What I have wished for you in my heart I have expressed to God and our good Mother. I have asked that your intentions be holy and that your actions be fervent, that you may have meekness, peace, humility, obedience, charity, perfect regularity, perfect submission of your wills to God's will, abandonment with full confidence to Jesus and Mary, recollection and the spirit of prayer.

You can see that my desires for you are abundant. I hope that divine Providence will be even more abundant in His mercy towards you. Have confidence! Bear your cross with patience and love and God will be with you.

Your most devoted uncle, in the charity of Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

P.S. Give my greetings, best wishes and congratulations to Madame St. Alexandre. I shall soon see the good Mother St. Bernard. It is always a new source of pleasure for me to be able to meet this good Mother.

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